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Carl Sternheim's play cycle AUS DEM BÜRGERLICHEN
HELDENLEBEN in the light of his theoretical writings

by

(C) John van Gelder

A THESIS

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The undersigned certify that they have read,
and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
for acceptance, a thesis entitled CARL STERNHEIM'S
PLAY CYCLE AUS DEM BÜRGERLICHEN HELDENLEBEN IN THE
LIGHT OF HIS THEORETICAL WRITINGS submitted by John
van Gelder in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts.

ABSTRACT

Carl Sternheim's play cycle Aus dem bürgerlichen Heldenleben has been a subject of controversy for nearly half a century. It has generally been regarded as a very negative critique of bourgeois society, but the re-evaluation of Sternheim's work since his death in 1942 has led to a more positive approach to his plays.

The secondary literature on Sternheim is examined in order to show how his works have always been subject to misinterpretation, and also to demonstrate how the recent, comparatively sympathetic approaches have been achieved by giving attention to the theoretical writings of Sternheim.

Following this survey, the theoretical writings themselves are examined, and the basic controversial concept of self-fulfillment is discussed. Sternheim's dramatic output is then examined in relation to the theoretical writings, in order to establish an underlying philosophical development, particularly in the concept of the "eigene Nuance," which Sternheim uses to express the idea of self-fulfillment.

In conclusion, the success of the play cycle as a vehicle for the expression of the theoretical ideas is discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

The critical reception of Carl Sternheim's plays, particularly by his contemporaries, reveals an astonishing lack of insight into the underlying philosophical scheme of his dramatic output. Once the idea had been conceived of Sternheim as a mordant critic of contemporary bourgeois society, there was no attempt made to seriously question this summary of Sternheim's intentions. This entirely negative and superficial approach continued unchecked for well over thirty years. It was not until a serious critical reappraisal was undertaken in the 1950's that it became apparent that Sternheim was intending to put forward a quite radical and positive philosophy of life.

The intention of this thesis is to outline the history of criticism of Sternheim's dramas, showing in particular how the work of modern critics indicates that Sternheim's intentions have been misinterpreted. Secondly, Sternheim's own theoretical writings will be examined in order to ascertain whether Sternheim produced a coherent programme to support his dramatic output.

Following the examination of the theoretical writings, it will be seen whether these ideas receive any practical application in the most important part of Sternheim's literary output, the cycle of plays known as Aus dem bürgerlichen

Heldenleben.¹

The thesis will conclude with a short estimation of the success of Sternheim's plays as vehicles for the expression of his philosophy of life.

¹The cycle comprises eleven plays: Die Hose (published 1911, première 1911), Die Kassette (1912, 1911), Bürger Schippel (1913, 1913), Der Snob (1914, 1914), Der Kandidat (1914, 1915), 1913 (1915, 1919), Tabula Rasa (1916, 1919), Perleberg (1917, 1917), Der entfesselte Zeitgenosse (1920, 1921), Der Nebbich (1922, 1922), Das Fossil (1925, 1923).

All these plays are found in Carl Sternheim, Gesamtwirk, ed. Wilhelm Emrich, 8 vols. (Neuwied am Rhein/Berlin, 1963-67). This edition will be used throughout for references to primary material, and will be referred to in abbreviated form as GW.

CHAPTER I

CARL STERNHEIM AND THE CRITICS

This chapter is not intended to give a complete background of Sternheim's fortunes at the hands of the critics. The intention is to examine the main trends in the criticism of his plays, and to illustrate the ambiguity which has arisen in criticism on Sternheim; an ambiguity, it might be added, which still remains unresolved.

Before the appearance of Die Hose in 1911, Sternheim was known as a writer of sentimental neoromantic dramas. Their critical reception had been luke-warm, and in one case disastrous: Don Juan, which received its première in 1912 at the "Deutsches Theater," Berlin, was viewed by a very hostile audience which on several occasions chose to deliberately misunderstand the dialogue. What was conceived as a powerful tragedy was received as an unwitting comedy.¹

Those plays which are to be discussed were, for the most part, banned until after the war when the Imperial Censorship Office ceased to function. Consequently, Sternheim's

¹In one scene in which the king is reading a message brought to him by one of his courtiers, the actor concerned read the message very slowly so that a pregnant pause ensued as the audience waited for the king to speak. Finally, the king looked slowly up and said, dramatically, "Wer schrieb den Unsinn?" whereupon a voice from the auditorium cried "Sternheim!" and the audience burst into unrestrained laughter.

See Sternheim's autobiographical Werkriegseuropa im Gleichnis meines Lebens (Amsterdam, 1936), p.151.

plays were mostly read until 1919, and then were performed frequently until about 1926. Thus, Sternheim's popularity was short-lived, but during his heyday his work occupied the attention of contemporary critics to a remarkable extent. This period embraces the vast majority of Sternheim criticism.

As Sternheim's works were banned in Nazi Germany, there was very slight attention paid to them by the critics. One notable exception is Albert Soergel's literary history¹ which gives a good summary of Sternheim's work.

It was not until the late 1940's that any attempt was made to put Sternheim into a proper critical perspective. Wolfgang Paulsen did pioneering bibliographical research² and laid the grounds for the subsequent critical editions of Sternheim's work.³ However, it was not until the 1960's that any concerted attempt was made to show Sternheim in a positive light by making out a case for an underlying positive philosophical basis to Sternheim's work.

The following history of criticism on Sternheim is

¹ Albert Soergel, Dichtung und Dichter der Zeit, Vol. II: Im Banne des Expressionismus (Leipzig, 1925), pp.644-661. This work was reprinted in 1933 and 1934.

² Wolfgang Paulsen, "Carl Sternheim-Bibliography," Philological Quarterly, XXVI (1947), 45-61.

³ Carl Sternheims Gesammelte Werke, ed. Fritz Hofmann, 6 vols. (Berlin, 1962 ff.).
Carl Sternheim. Gesamtwerk, ed. Wilhelm Emrich, 8 vols. (Neuwied am Rhein/Berlin, 1963-67).

divided into two sections: pre-1939, which consists largely of criticism by Sternheim's contemporaries, and post-war criticism, which concentrates on the re-evaluation of Sternheim's work.

a) Criticism up to 1939

In retrospect it is easy enough to dismiss much of the criticism of Sternheim's dramas, which consisted, for the most part, of superficial newspaper articles designed to steer a conservative theatre-going public away from Sternheim's monstrous creations and, at the same time, to make the public aware of how clever the critic was. A typical example is offered by Alfred Kerr whose writing is so incredibly idiosyncratic--a blend of vague reminiscences and stream-of-consciousness technique--that his literary evaluations are entirely suspect. The following is a typically "clever" summary of Sternheim:

Sternheim . . . muss verbraucht werden wie er ist.
Ein suchender, im letzten Grunde flacher trotzdem oft entzückender und feiner Poet ohne pectus.

Er hat (so scheint es) Ausdrucksmittel für Stücke gefunden. Diese Stücke nicht.¹

The condescending tone of Kerr's opinions does, at least, convey some appreciation of Sternheim's innovative

¹Alfred Kerr, Die Welt im Drama, II (Berlin, 1917), 120.

6

style, which few other reviewers of the time were prepared to allow. Here, for example, is another contemporary critic's summary of the bourgeois comedies:

... vom Kaffeehaus aus beobachtete, aus Zeitungen ausgelesene Schwächen, ins Groteske verzerrt, ohne viel künstlerische Arbeit rasch in Szene und Akt umgesetzt und demselben Publikum, das man "verachtet," doch vorgeführt . . .¹

This is fully representative of the aggressive reception of Sternheim's work in the popular periodicals.²

In the more extended forms of writing--critical essays and books--Sternheim received some support, although again this is balanced by a large amount of biting criticism.

Kasimir Edschmid detected Sternheim's despair at the inadequacy of bourgeois existence, but he criticizes Sternheim for failing to provide any form of solution to this problem.³

One of Sternheim's chief supporters was a former employee, Kuno Brombacher, who had worked in the Sternheim

¹ Wolfgang Schumann, "Carl Sternheim," Deutsche Zeitschrift Dresden, XXX (September, 1917), 170.

² See, for example, Karl Viëtor, "Carl Sternheim," Neue Blätter für Kunst und Literatur, XVIII (1917), 296ff.

³ See Die doppelköpfige Nymphe (Berlin, 1920), p.153: "In seiner Ironie ist wirklich auch Liebe zum Bessern, in der Anklage Wissen um neue Gebiete, der Hass ist oft überschreitene Verzweiflung."

household as a tutor. His study of the German bourgeois¹ is largely devoted to Sternheim's plays and to their underlying philosophical intent. Brombacher claims that Sternheim's work represents the coming of age of the bourgeois on stage. The previous attempts at bourgeois comedy tended to give a clichéd, superficial picture of stock characters in farcical situations. There was no attempt made to portray the real world, but instead an example of Krähwinkeliana² for the amusement of the audience. Sternheim, however, wants to make the audience identify by showing them their own milieu and their own selves:

... das weite Milieu der Bürgerlichkeit und Kleinbürgerlichkeit sowohl staats- als sozialpolitisch, mondän, ethisch und weiter in allen Dimensionen, indem er im Typus, den er gibt, jedes Individuum einschliesst als in sein gesteigertes Ganze.³

Although he may present the bourgeoisie in grotesquely comic terms, his intention is to shock his audience into recognising the decadence of its world. Sternheim shows how any spiritual values have disappeared, how the lack of breeding and the appalling ignorance of the middle-classes

¹Kuno Brombacher, Der deutsche Bürger im Literaturspiegel von Lessing bis Sternheim (München, 1920).

²A term synonymous with provincial limitedness after its use by Kotzebue in Die deutschen Kleinstädte (n.p., 1803).

³Brombacher, p.46.

has led to the mystification of money in order to magnify the distinction between the wealthy bourgeoisie and the working class.

Following this hypothesis, Brombacher presents the four types of bourgeois: the petty bourgeois, the educated bourgeois, the capitalist-bourgeois and the major capitalist-bourgeois. Each type is then illustrated with an example taken from the cycle Aus dem bürgerlichen Heldenleben: Theobald Maske (Die Hose) is the petty bourgeois, Heinrich Krull (Die Kassette) is the educated bourgeois, Tillmann Hicketier (Bürger Schippel) is the capitalist-bourgeois, and Christian Maske (Der Snob) is the major capitalist.

Grotesque though these characters are shown to be, they do, in an exaggerated manner, represent the attitudes and aspirations of their age. Brombacher admires Sternheim because he is prepared to show up the short-comings of society with idealistic fervour: "Darin liegt dieses Dichters Grösse, dass er sich dazu überwand, die Zeit mit ihren eigenen Waffen zu besiegen, dass er die Idee definitorisch in ihr selbst widerlegte, nicht mit dichterischen Impulsen gegen sie Sturm lief."¹

Brombacher goes even further to show that Sternheim is, in fact, a victim of his times: his natural love of human-

¹ Brombacher, p.85.

ity, which Brombacher sees symbolised in the figure of Don Juan (Don Juan), is so advanced a concept that the audience is unable to recognise it in Sternheim's plays and assumes that the superficial impression of biting satire gives the complete picture. Sternheim will eventually be recognised, he claims, for his prophetic analysis of bourgeois society: "Sternheim wird einmal in der Geistesgeschichte des deutschen Idealismus das unumgängliche und wichtigste Ereignis heissen."¹

In contrast to Kuno Brombacher's avid enthusiasm for Sternheim, which corresponds, in part, to the most recent critical approaches, Bernhard Diebold provides a mordant critical attack in his work of the same period.² The essay begins with the controversial subject of language in Sternheim's plays, which Diebold considers to be no more than a string of clichés quite unlike normal spoken language. Diebold then shows how some characters change their style of speech in mid-play.³ Sternheim is accused of creating an exclusive, literary-salon style, which he then uses to portray

¹ Brombacher, p.105.

² Bernhard Diebold, "Sternheim der Grandseigneur," Anarchie im Drama (Frankfurt a.M., 1921), pp.75-132.

³ e.g. Theobald Maske who uses biblical language: "Mein Leben währet siebzig Jahre . . ." and also "translationese": "Auf dem Boden des mir angeborenen Bewusstseins stehend, kann ich in diesem Zeitraum manches auf meine Weise geniessen . . ." See Diebold, p.82ff.

the bourgeoisie so that he can show their artificiality, although their speech is really quite natural. The evidence of an artificially created language adds substance to the accusation by Diebold that Sternheim is bent on creating nothing short of caricatures:

[Sternheim] hat . . . das bürgerliche Heldenleben prostituiert. Allerdings mit der Unerbittlichkeit des völlig gleichgültigen Entlarvers und mit der Schadenfreude eines Karikaturisten von Th. Th. Heines Grausamkeit. Die Übertreibung der Karikatur spricht dem deutschen Michel beinahe auch die letzte Möglichkeit zum Besserwerden ab.¹

Diebold's main criticism is that Sternheim does not produce any characters but only types, whose function is to reflect a particular facet of bourgeois life: "Sie tun nichts im eigenen Namen; nur als Vertreter der Bildung, Moral, oder Unmoral ihres Standes, ihres Berufs; als Erfüller einer spezifischen Bürgereigenschaft."²

Sternheim's types are divided into two main sorts: the bourgeois e.g. Theobald Maske (Die Hose), Heinrich Krull (Die Kassette), Tilmann Hicketier (Bürger Schippel), and the romantic e.g. Frank Scarron and Benjamin Mandelstam (Die Hose), Alfons Seidenschnur (Die Kassette), der Fürst (Bürger Schippel). These are supplemented by the romantic ladies e.g. Luise Maske

¹ Diebold, p.87.

² Diebold, p.91.

(Die Hose), Lydia Krull (Die Kassette), Thekla Hicketier (Bürger Schippel).

This division of types is not pursued with any great thoroughness. Diebold examines the plot of two early plays, Die Hose and Die Kassette, in which romantic and bourgeois forces are very obviously opposed. In Die Hose the conflict is waged on a very basic, sexual level, and the "honest bourgeois" openly routs the second-hand romantic, Mandelstam, and the impotent poet, Scarron: "Aber hier gibt Sternheim dem gänzlich Unromantischen von vornherein gerne die Macht über die poetischen Schwindler. Lieber Unseele als falsche Seele; denkt er."¹

The distinction which Diebold makes between complete lack of feeling and a falsification of feeling indicates that he is examining the moral issue in Sternheim's plays of being honest to oneself and in one's dealings with other people. Therefore, in his analysis of Die Kassette, Diebold shows most sympathy for Krull because his obsession with the acquisition of wealth leads him to reject the natural feelings of love for his wife and his daughter. The extremeness of Krull's actions transcends the comic and, for Diebold, attains almost tragic status. The plot itself contains a welter of subterfuge and immorality, but Diebold chooses what can be construed as the only positive moral element. This suggests that despite

¹Diebold, p.95.

his opening attack on Sternheim, Diebold recognises that there are positive elements to be discovered in Sternheim's work.

In the subsequent examination of Bürger Schippel, Diebold extends his sympathy with Sternheim's idea of honesty in personal relationships still further. Although he gives due attention to the central story of the rise of Paul Schippel from a despised proletarian bastard to a respected member of Bürgertum, Diebold places considerable emphasis on the romance between Thekla Hicketier and the Fürst, in which he recognises that both partners succeed in escaping the strictures of their class. The play concludes what Diebold terms the "plays of the lower and middle classes." He keeps his more pungent criticism for the upper-class subjects, particularly as revealed in Der Snob for its lack of credibility:

Im "Snob" vereinigen sich in übertriebenstem Ausmass die stärkste Energie eines genialen Strebens und die geckenhafteste Affenkunst in der Nachahmung von Mode und Gehaben der Aristokratie. Dieser Zwiespalt ist unüberbrückt; das nimmt dem "Snob" die Überzeugungskraft. Er wird theoretisches Phantom; man muss zu vieles gutwillig glauben.¹

Diebold finds that this impression is supported by the scene in which Christian's father, Theobald, and Graf Palen first meet each other (III, ix). The former has just learnt

¹ Diebold, pp.104-105.

of his son's intentions to marry into the aristocracy, the latter has just discovered that his prospective son-in-law, whom he had been led to believe was an orphan, has an obviously healthy father. That the father, who is petty bourgeois through and through, does not seize the opportunity to disrupt the mésalliance, and that the Count does not question Christian about the lie concerning his parents, strikes Diebold as grossly inadequate and unrealistic. The lack of credibility of the characters' reactions leads Diebold to accuse Sternheim of complete artificiality in his creations:

Er konstruiert für die Möglichkeit seiner absurdnen Situationen einen in seiner Mischung von Genialität, Überkraft, weichlicher Schauspielerei und affenhaftem Gekkentum ganz unmöglichen Konglomerat-Menschen. Um diesen Snob als Übermenschen zu ermöglichen, muss seine Mitwelt übermäßig dumm gemacht werden.¹

Not only does Diebold find the characters artificial, he also finds them immoral. The ruthless hero, Christian Maske, achieves his ends through fraud and heartless manipulation of people. Yet his immorality goes unpunished, claims Diebold. This extension of the argument by Diebold is all rather puzzling. In his previous analyses, he had given the impression of at least appreciating what Sternheim's intentions were. In this case he is deliberately ignoring the fact, of which he is well aware, that Christian encounters

¹Diebold, pp.110-111.

his fate--none of his children are capable of continuing his laboriously created empire--in 1913 in the third play of the tetralogy about the Maske family. Consequently, Diebold's argument, which runs like a leitmotiv through Sternheim criticism, that Sternheim attempts to satirise the bourgeoisie without advocating any positive solutions, is a distortion of the evidence which Diebold has presented. Yet Diebold uses this evidence again to advance the claim that the lack of any ethical element leads to a lack of conflict, and, therefore, a lack of dramatic tension.

Diebold's justification for this deliberate ignoring of 1913 is that Der Snob is termed a comedy (Komödie) while 1913 is termed a play (Schauspiel). This, he claims, reflects Sternheim's inadequacies. If Sternheim could employ ethical issues in his comedies (as did Molière), the change would not be necessary. As it is, Sternheim introduces a new and, in Diebold's opinion, unacceptable seriousness to Christian's character, and accompanies this with a large element of pathos. Diebold concludes the section with an examination of the structure, in which he sees again a lack of dramatic conflict, even though the ethical element is included.

Diebold's essay finishes with a brief study of Don Juan (1909) and Die Marquise von Arcis (1919) which, for Diebold, represent the beginning and end of the cycle Aus dem bürgerlichen Heldenleben.

A more vitriolic attack is launched by Julius Bab in

his periodic reviews of German drama.¹ His criticism is made all the more telling because it indicates a shift in approach towards Sternheim when he was at his creative peak.

Bab notes in the early plays how false the existence of the bourgeois is, and compares it to the healthy existence of the peasant who lives at one with Nature. The peasant's world is static, secure in its roots, whereas the middle-class is part of a general movement which detached itself from its roots without providing a really definite alternative: "Das liegt am Wesen des Mittelstandes, der eben 'vermitteln' möchte; der von unten kommt und nach oben will, und der nur auf wenigen Gebieten (geographisch, historisch und geistig gesprochen) eine ganz selbständige und sichere Haltung errungen hat."² This is quite valid an observation to make in connection with Sternheim's plays, which, ironically enough, Sternheim illustrates himself in two later plays, Der Ständer (1916) and Der Nebbich (1922).

Unlike Diebold, who sees Christian Maske as a ruthless villain, Bab finds in "der Snob" a tragic figure who rejects what he has and strives for what he can only possess by fraud. Such an observation indicates Bab's greater sympathy with Sternheim, which stems largely from his recognition of

¹ Julius Bab, Die Chronik des deutschen Dramas, 5 vols. (Berlin, 1921-1926).

² Bab, III, 175-176.

the intellectual basis of Sternheim's plays. However, it does not prevent him from attacking Sternheim for his total lack of emotional engagement with his work:

Er verhöhnt alle; wichtig ist ihm niemand und nichts. Und deshalb ist er im Grunde gar kein Satiriker sondern nur ein Blagueur. Denn der grosse Satiriker schreibt immer aus einem Zorn, aus einem sehr leidenschaftlich positiven Gefühl; er zerreist die Lüge, um Platz zu machen für seine Wahrheit.¹

In the succeeding volume, Bab maintains the attack which is made more serious by the inclusion of Perleberg, Sternheim's first play to positively convey his beliefs:²

Und als er (in der Komödie "Perleberg") zum erstenmal etwas Positives zu geben versuchte, und zwischen seine gierigen Philisterfratzen einen wirksamen Träger der Menschenliebe stellen wollte, da tat die banale Rühseligkeit, die romanhafte Blässe dieses lungenkranken Volksschullehrers in ihrer grossen Unlebendigkeit erst ganz deutlich die innere Armut und die starre Begrenztheit von Sternheims Talent dar.³

In the case of Perleberg, which is generally accepted as being a play of little merit, Sternheim deserved the criticism he received in many ways, but this apparently damning quote by a well-known critic serves only to underline the

¹Bab, III, 180.

²The original title, "Mihlow," was changed to "Perleberg." In his edition of Sternheim's works Emrich uses the title Der Ständer, as Sternheim himself had proposed.

³Bab, IV, 130.

failure of his contemporaries to look beyond the critical side of his work and to find a positive answer.

This failure lies in the hands of those critics who did not bother to read Sternheim's major essays, which can be said to begin with his foreword to the second edition of Die Hose in 1918. Karl Holl gives consideration to this material in his study of German comedy.¹ Initially Holl shows that Sternheim's intention is to destroy the mechanical civilization of the Wilhelminian era through laughter. Sternheim's aim is to show the truth about society, just like Shaw and Wedekind, but he distinguishes himself from other social critics by his thoroughness and his lack of pity: ". . . in kühler Überlegenheit schreibt er seine comédie bourgeoise; kein göttlich-heiterer Humor beseelt sie, der teuflisch-bissige Geist, der stets verneint, hat sie erzeugt."²

However, Holl's criticism is not intended to be purely negative for he considers that Sternheim's strength lies in his satire of the bourgeoisie. The complete lack of individuality in the characters reflects the mechanical age whose sole characteristic is ambition. Consequently Sternheim provides constant variations in the form of different generations and social strata to disguise this. Any individual

¹ Karl Holl, Geschichte des deutschen Lustspiels (Leipzig, 1923), pp. 332-336.

² Holl, p. 333.

qualities are absorbed from external sources:

Denn dies Wesen ist seine Wesenlosigkeit. Fremder Wille bestimmt sein Schicksal. Ob er sich romantisch oder praktisch gibt, stets ist es Nachahmung, Anpassung, Bestimmung von aussen her.¹

Although Sternheim's language is also seen as lacking in any individuality, its elliptical nature is contributory to the precision and speed of the dialogue.

In his discussion of Sternheim's critical writings, Holl pays particular attention to the foreword to the second edition of Die Hose, in which Sternheim stresses the need for the individual to fulfill the unique possibilities within him ("seinen frischen Einzelton"). Holl goes on to examine several plays which exemplify this idea: Perleberg, Die Marquise von Arcis and Der entfesselte Zeitgenosse. The examination is very critical of the dramatic qualities of these plays, and as in the case of Bernhard Diebold, Perleberg receives short shrift:

Auch "Perleberg" worin Sternheim sich plötzlich als Abkömmling rührseliger Familiendramatik des 18. Jahrhunderts erweist, gibt schliesslich dasselbe Resultat: im Grunde sind Sternheims Komödien alle pathetische Possen, wobei eine unbewusste Komik darin liegt, dass der Possenschreiber uns an seinen heiligen Ernst glauben machen möchte und der Pathetiker sich als Feind alles Pathetischen gebärdet.²

¹Holl, p.335.

²Holl, p.336.

Without resorting to the violent indignation of his contemporaries, Holl seriously questions the whole basis of Sternheim's work. His conclusion is as cynical as he would have us believe Sternheim's plays are.

Two essays concerning Sternheim are contained in Ludwig Marcuse's literary history.¹ Guido Brand includes Sternheim in his essay "Neu-Romantik,"² though largely on the basis of Sternheim's prose work. However, Brand claims that Sternheim suppresses his Romanticism in favour of a biting irony which reduces him to a completely negative critic. Ludwig Marcuse gives a more detailed and more provocative critique of Sternheim in "Das expressionistische Drama."³ The most interesting point in this essay is that Marcuse recognises those elements which modern criticism has concentrated upon, and although he has employed them in a unique manner, his conclusions are remarkably similar.

Marcuse first considers the social background of Sternheim's time, and points to the breaking down of society's structure. This process led to the creation of an asocial, absolute, sociologically undistinguishable and isolated man whose conflict is played out in an unstructured society. The

¹ Literaturgeschichte der Gegenwart, ed. Ludwig Marcuse, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1925).

² Marcuse, I, 81-190.

³ Marcuse, II, 137-169.

only recognisable society left consists of Philistines, which makes it a fit subject for satire, and nothing else. It is an indefinite half-world which can never occupy the foreground. Carl Sternheim's relationship to this world is defined as follows:

Auch Carl Sternheim ist zuletzt nicht Satiriker, sondern Pathetiker. Er schildert keine Gesellschaft. Er karikiert keine Gesellschaft um einer entwickelteren Gesellschaft willen. Diese Philister-Gesellschaft ist gerade noch dazu gut, um witzige Folie für isolierte Monologisten zu sein. Sternheims Ziel ist nicht Entlarvung; oder noch detaillierte, noch intimere, noch umfassendere Belichtung des Bürgers (das ist nur Nebenprodukt). Sondern: er entwickelt den Bürger zum Über-Bürger, den Witz zum Hymnus und das Gesellschafts-Bild zum lyrischen Monolog. Analytiker, der er von Talent ist; Experimentator, der er von Talent ist; reizt es ihn immer wieder, die Psychotechnik "Maske" zu probieren und in bunten Variationen ihr Gesetz sichtbar zu machen--und vielleicht liegt hier Sternheims psychologische und artistische Meisterschaft.¹

This may appear to be a contradictory remark in that the exaggeration of reality to a super-reality would normally imply a satirical intent, but Sternheim's exaggerations have two decidedly non-bourgeois effects: the qualities of the normal bourgeois are made into fixed ideas which assume obsessive proportions and result in an alienation of the bourgeois audience, which thus precludes any identification. Secondly, Sternheim's concern for the bourgeois beneath the surface reflects a new appreciation of the class, which

¹ Marcuse, II, 149.

previous writers failed to find. Marcuse expresses it thus:

"Der Bürger sieht nicht, dass ihm Sternheim sein Recht zu sich selbst gibt, indem er ihn pathetisch nimmt."¹

Marcuse then gives an analysis of what he considers to be the three phases of bourgeois development, which culminates in the idea of the "Über-Bürger." The first stage is seen as tragic because the bourgeois is terrified of disturbing the present order. The second stage occurs when the bourgeois overcomes this fear and settles into the normal, complacent existence which typifies the bourgeois. The third stage is attained by the "Über-Bürger" who is scared of nothing and is bent on self-fulfillment. In this category are placed Krull and Schippel. He leads a life of heroic intensity in the manner of a Nietzschean Triebmensch quite in contrast to the dull existence of the other forms of bourgeois:

Der Über-Bürger ist eine Entwicklungsphase, eine wertvollere Entwicklungsphase des Typen Bürger, fanatisch gewordener, besessener Bürger: keine Erledigung des Bürgers. Sternheim ist kein Satiriker des Bürgertums von einem ausserbürgerlichen Pathos her; sondern selbst pathetisch Bürger, Feind nur des unpathetischen sterilen Bourgeois.²

Marcuse's analysis is, perhaps, the most thoughtful of the period, but the lack of textual evidence detracts from its value for literary criticism.

¹ Marcuse, II, 149.

² Marcuse, II, 150.

There remain many other critics of Sternheim. Among the most aggressive are Robert Arnold¹ and Arnold Zweig,² both of whom attack Sternheim for his negativism. Several critics find that Sternheim's very grand style of living gave grounds for suspicion about the sincerity of his attacks on the structure of society.³ Frequently he is dismissed as a Romantic for which the nebulous idealism of plays such as Perleberg is cited.⁴ Among these latter critics is Otto Forst de Battaglia,⁵ who makes a very valid observation about the first three plays dealing with the Maske family (Die Hose, Der Snob, 1913) in which all three generations seem to be the same age. Thus when Christian dies in 1913 at the age of seventy, it presupposes he was born in 1843. Yet in Die Hose, which culminates in Christian's conception, we have admirers

¹ Robert Arnold, Das deutsche Drama (München, 1925), pp. 787ff.

² Arnold Zweig, Juden auf der deutschen Bühne (Berlin, 1928), pp. 225-231.

³ See, for example, Klaus Kändler's diss. "Das expressionistische Drama vor dem ersten Weltkrieg" (Leipzig, 1959); Bernhard Diebold, Anarchie im Drama (Frankfurt a. M., 1921).

⁴ See, for example, Robert Arnold, Das deutsche Drama (München, 1925); Rudolf Billetta, "Carl Sternheim" (diss. Wien, 1950).

⁵ Otto Forst de Battaglia, Der Kampf mit dem Drachen (Berlin, 1931), pp. 175-180.

of Nietzsche and Wagner!

Sternheim received scant attention in the English-speaking world. The few available criticisms are slight and further the impression of Sternheim as an out and out satirist.¹

Sternheim criticism virtually ceased during the National Socialist period for Sternheim's works were banned to the public. Occasional references are found in theses, but these generally describe Sternheim as a purely negative satirist.² Surprisingly enough, a very lucid article on Sternheim is found in Albert Soergel's literary history,³ which contains a distinct nazi bias. However, this bias, which has been eliminated in the revised edition of Curt Hohoff,⁴ does not effect Soergel's argument. Soergel begins his essay with a detailed biographical summary intended to show that Sternheim comes from a wealthy background, which insulates him from bourgeois society and renders his critical writings suspect.

¹e.g. William A. Drake, Contemporary European Writers (New York, 1928), pp.152-156.

²e.g. Marie von Keller, "Der deutsche Expressionismus im Drama seiner Hauptvertreter" (diss. Weimar, 1936). Sternheim is cursorily dismissed as "nur zynischer Satiriker" (p.22).

³See footnote 1, page 4.

⁴Albert Soergel and Curt Hohoff, Dichtung und Dichter der Zeit, Vol. II: Im Banne des Expressionismus, rev. ed. (Düsseldorf, 1963), pp.222-237.

At this stage Soergel examines the two major essays Berlin oder Juste Milieu (1920) and Tasso oder Kunst des Juste Milieu (1921). Emphasis is put on the venom with which Sternheim attacks the bourgeoisie. They are shown to have debased society through the hypocrisy which allows them to flourish by hiding the immorality of their own actions behind a façade of formal conventions and clichéd attitudes, symbolised by the idea of the juste milieu:

Der Bürger ist ein verächtliches Wesen, das nicht den Mut zu sich selber hat. Nach oben den Lastern der Geldgier, Habsucht, Streiterei und Kriegerei verfallen, übt der Bürger nach unten einen anmassenden Klassenhass. Nach aussen gilt¹ der Schein, der goldene Mittelweg, das juste milieu.

In addition, the bourgeoisie has created its own concept of Art, which furthers the concept of the juste milieu. Sternheim includes almost all the prominent literary figures from the time of Goethe, for whom Sternheim reserved a particular hatred. This stems from, what he considers to be, Goethe's approval of social conventions curbing the freedom of the individual as exemplified by the retort of the Princess to Tasso's plea for individual freedom: "Erlaubt ist, was sich ziemt."

Soergel proceeds to show Sternheim's doctrine of the "eigene Nuance" which calls upon the individual to lose all

¹ Soergel, pp.645-646.

his preconceptions and act according to his instincts. More than any other critic of the pre-war period, Soergel allows Sternheim to speak for himself by quoting frequently from the critical works. However, his is by no means sympathetic towards Sternheim. The concluding section of the essay lists a series of contradictions in Sternheim's writings, the most serious of which is Sternheim's claim that moral codes are the result of bourgeois preconceptions and should be avoided, and Sternheim's own harsh judgement of other people's actions. The final conclusion on Soergel's part is that Sternheim is not really interested in renovating society, but only in airing his scorn:

Alles in allem: so widerspruchslos und gegen jeden Einwand gewappnet ist Sternheims Welt und ihr Schöpfer nicht. Wirklichkeitssinn und Wahrheitsliebe in allen Ehren:— Wahrheitsliebe allein, um den Preis jeder anderen menschlichen Triebkraft, ist ein Mantel für Ichbessenheit. Sternheim glaubt ein europäischer Weltdichter zu sein; er ist, fürchte ich, . . . einer, der sich liebt, doch nicht die Welt oder gar den Menschen . . .¹

Soergel's conclusion is a familiar one. From the appearance of Die Hose onwards, Sternheim has been accused of either outright negative criticism or of putting forward ideas of dubious validity to satisfy the promptings of his ego. Sternheim's apologists have done little more than say his criticism was justified and have avoided the issue of his

¹ Soergel, p.661.

critical writings, which were not examined in any great detail until the post-war period.

b) Criticism since 1945

Post-war criticism offers new possibilities not only because the passage of time puts a writer into historical perspective, but because the partition of Germany has created two quite distinct literary schools. Not unnaturally the East German critics look upon Sternheim as the critic of a corrupt society, but this does not mean that his philosophy is silently glossed over. In Western Europe, Sternheim has been the subject of a minor revival during the 1960's as a result of bibliographical and editorial work by leading scholars during the 1950's.¹ A thorough examination of Sternheim's collected writings has added in no small part to the reappraisal of Sternheim's intentions.

One of the first critics to re-examine Sternheim was Elise Dosenheimer² who recognises Sternheim not only as a prophetic critic who saw the collapse of the social order outlined in the sterility of his contemporaries, but also as preacher of a new social morality in which everyone would try

¹In particular the work by Wolfgang Paulsen--see footnote 2, page 4--and Rudolf Billetta--see footnote 4, page 22.

²Elise Dosenheimer, Das deutsche soziale Drama von Lessing bis Sternheim (Konstanz, 1949), pp.281-319.

and live to his own standards without attempting to hide behind a hypocritical façade: "Es handelt sich also bei Sternheim um Jasagen zur eignen Person unter allen Umständen, von Wert oder Unwert dieser abgesehen".¹ Yet on examining his plays Dosenheimer finds a wealth of examples for precisely the sort of bourgeois that, she claims, Sternheim is condemning: Theobald Maske (Die Hose) who cloaks his activities with deception, Paul Schippel (Bürger Schippel) who loses himself to money, Russek (Der Kandidat) who is the complete chameleon. Surprisingly the only really true hero as far as Dosenheimer is concerned, seems to be Christian Maske (Der Snob) because he overcomes his background and acquires broader perspectives in a higher culture. It is in 1913 that Christian reveals that he has transcended his former egocentricity and is prepared to give his life in an attempt to ensure a better society.

Despite the appearance of a more positive attitude towards Sternheim in critical circles, essays continued to be published which did nothing but damn Sternheim for his negativism e.g. Wilhelm Grenzmann: "Er hat keinen Humor, sondern setzt überall an zu galligen Spott. Er missbilligt, was er vorfindet, aber er gibt nicht an, was sein soll."²

¹ Dosenheimer, p.318.

² Wilhelm Grenzmann, Deutsche Dichtung der Gegenwart (Frankfurt a. M., 1953), p.236.

A great deal of biographical information was gathered in Rudolf Billetta's dissertation on Sternheim,¹ but the argument is little more than an adaptation of Arnold Zweig's, in which the pre-war plays are contrasted with the post-war plays. Billetta claims that Sternheim became engaged in socialist politics and produced critical material to place his earlier plays in line with the more obviously polemical later works.

Sternheim comes in for criticism in a well-argued essay by Carol Petersen.² He sees Sternheim's work in an essentially negative light, which he attributes largely to the disparity between Sternheim's social and intellectual life. Whilst on the one hand, Sternheim rejected the moral basis of society, he still allowed this society to provide him with all necessary material comforts. This inconsistency, of which he was well aware, only increased his cynicism and embittered his writings:

Ungenüge an der Zeit und an sich selbst können als die beiden Triebkräfte gelten, die ihn durch dreissig Jahre immer wieder dazu drängten, auf dem Weg über die Komödie und die Novelle Zeitanalyse und Zeitkritik zu üben.³

¹Rudolf Billetta, "Carl Sternheim" (diss. Wien, 1950).

²Carol Petersen, "Carl Sternheim," Expressionismus, Gestalten einer literarischen Bewegung, eds. H. Friedmann and O. Mann (Heidelberg, 1956), pp.280-295.

³Petersen, p.281.

Petersen finds Sternheim's world quite pitiless and quite without hope: "Erlösung schien von aussen und innen unmöglich geworden . . ."¹ The qualities of Sternheim's distorted vision which remain still attractive to a modern audience are to be sought in the structural balance and the polished humour, not in the philosophical elements.

Although he concedes that Sternheim is a brilliant critic, Petersen condemns him for his failure to provide any positive alternatives: "Sternheim ist der Meisterchirurg des deutschen Dramas, aber für die Nachbehandlung seiner Patienten reichten die Kräfte nicht immer aus."² This inability to provide a solution is related to Sternheim's cold nature in which love and compassion played a minor part. Sternheim's feelings were dictated by his intellect; consequently the only characters for which Sternheim makes a convincing case are those who can be justified by reason e.g. Marquis von Arcis (Die Marquise von Arcis) and Oskar Wilde (Oskar Wilde). Petersen's surprising decision to ignore the critical writings, although they are examined in the course of his essay, leads him to conclude that Sternheim is as cynical as he at first sight may appear: "Er blieb der eigenwillige Analytiker und Interpret der gesellschaftlichen Zu- und Missstände

¹Petersen, p.283.

²Petersen, p.285.

seiner Zeit und tat dies im Tone eines misanthropischen Zynismus."¹

Paul Fechter also ascribes unflattering motives to Sternheim's criticism. He begins his discussion² by pointing to the intellectual nature of Sternheim's dramas. Then he declares the main principle is to judge people for what they are, a philosophical idea which he relates to Husserl's phenomenology. In order to do this, says Fechter, Sternheim dissects reality and creates a new perspective from which the true values of the world may be recognised. Sternheim is compared to Picasso who also dissects and reconstructs with the emphasis on certain parts in order to make a particular point.

Sternheim's aim is defined as the illustration of the central conflict within the individual between morality and reason which decides whether the individual attains moral freedom. This is taken from Sternheim's own definition of art in Tasso, oder Kunst des Juste Milieu:

Die nicht für Sittliches oder Vernünftiges voreingenommene, über tatsächlichen Ereignissen stehende Sichtbarmachung der zwischen beiden Kräften des wirklichen Seins, Vernunft und Sitte, ewig stattfindenden Zusammenstösse mittels eigener künstlerischer Massgesetze.

¹ Petersen, p.294.

² Paul Fechter, Das Europäische Drama, Vol. II: Vom Naturalismus zum Expressionismus (Mannheim, 1957), pp.477-487.

Vernunft, die uns zum demütigen Objekt notwendiger irdischer Zwänge macht, sittliche Freiheit aus Vision, die uns ewig verführt, Herr einer himmlischen, voraussetzunglosen Welt sein zu wollen, werden aus Qualen ihrer Katastrophen im Werk der Kunst zur Harmonie verglichen, in dem in nur dem Künstler sichtbaren, ständig wechselnden Proportionen der ewige Sieg über die Disharmonie des Kampfs zwischen reiner Vernunft und reiner Neigung gewährleistet wird.¹

Yet what Sternheim chooses to call moral freedom is seen by Fechter as a brand of "intellectual Romanticism," the seeds of which can be found in Sternheim's early works, which has little of positive value to offer. As a prime example, Fechter takes Christian Maske (Der Snob) who seems to be no more than an empty shell, who is so flexible that his individuality has become a constant readiness to adapt to the needs of the moment. He is summed up thus:

Die Wesenlosigkeit grosser Bereiche einer Zeit, die mehr vom Theater des Lebens als vom Leben aus lebte, der erfolgreiches Sichdarstellen wichtiger war als das Sein, wichtiger fast als der Erfolg, ist hier ohne Mitleid . . . hingesellt.²

Christian's success at the conclusion of Der Snob is not in his attaining the level of the nobility but, rather, in his reducing them to his level. Fechter makes the general criticism that Sternheim imposes his ideas on his characters instead of creating characters from which to develop the

¹ GW, VI, 201.

² Fechter, p.482.

ideas.

A well-known English critic of the drama of this period is Hugo F. Garten. Although born in Germany, he has now settled in England and has written largely in English since the war. In his survey of German drama¹ Garten emphasises the satirical content of Sternheim's work, which leads him to conclude that Sternheim was only capable of producing a very negative philosophy: "His method was purely destructive; he had no positive values to set against the false gods he relentlessly exposed in his comedies, save that of unscrupulous egotism and self realisation at any price."²

This concept of Sternheim as a purely negative figure is still found in very recent work,³ which illustrates the continuing ambiguity which Sternheim's work provokes.

One of the most provocative essays on Sternheim since the war is by his first bibliographer, Wolfgang Paulsen.⁴ His intention is to put Sternheim into, what Paulsen terms,

¹Hugo F. Garten, Modern German Drama (London, Eng., 1959).

²Garten, p.101.

³e.g. Erika Runge, "Vom Wesen des Expressionismus im Drama und auf der Bühne" (diss. Frankfurt a. M., 1962). She dismisses Sternheim thus: "Sternheim klagt die innere Schwäche, die Hohlheit und Kulturlosigkeit seiner Zeit an. Doch bleibt er mit seinen Komödien im Nur-Negativen stecken, bleibt kalter Analytiker und intellectueller Spötter." (p.9).

⁴Wolfgang Paulsen, "Carl Sternheim: das Ende des Immoralismus," Akzente, 3 (1956), 273-287.

the tradition of immorality in European literature, which appears to be the luxurious and sensual aspects of Romanticism. Sternheim is shown as a person subject to love-hate relationships with those around him, which accounts for his violent neuroses and final nervous collapse. He disliked the smug bourgeois atmosphere of his home environment, yet he found his father in many ways an admirable person and was extremely fond of his mother. At the same time, he disliked his father's Jewishness, and anti-semitism can be found in his works. His relationships with women grew increasingly neurotic, as his inability to maintain a stable marital relationship implies. Indulgent by nature, Sternheim joined a cavalry regiment to instill some discipline into himself. Although he failed in his intentions, he emerged with a greater respect for his father's generation, which led in part to the portrayal of opposed generations in Sternheim's subsequent dramas. The most salient biographical detail in Paulsen's eyes is Sternheim's style of living: elaborate castles, pseudo-aristocratic pretensions, collections of objet d'art. All this evidence is accumulated to underline Paulsen's claim that Sternheim's aristocratic, conservative background and his unstable character would tend to produce a person whose natural literary expression would be found in Neoromanticism or Aestheticism. This, in turn, leads to an emphasis on the individual who exists at the expense of society:

Nicht also Kritik an der bürgerlichen Welt ist das Konzept des Dramatikers Sternheim, sondern Überwindung des Bürgertums durch den Überbürger--genauer gesagt: durch die animalistischen Instinkte im bürgerlichen Menschen.¹

Paulsen claims the true Sternheimian hero is to be found in the very last plays e.g. J. P. Morgan (John Pierpont Morgan). This kind of figure is a projection from Sternheim's fantasy in the American tradition of the "rugged individualist" or in the very European tradition of a libertine e.g. Oskar Wilde (Oskar Wilde). Sternheim's bourgeoisie, Paulsen claims, is essentially a literary creation against which Sternheim pits his heroes who are more interested in self-indulgence than reinterpretation of morality. Sternheim's plea for the individual is seen as a negative reaction in face of the overwhelming social changes which Sternheim observed. However, the credibility of this claim is made dubious by the absence of any textual evidence.

A recent edition of Sternheim's work was prepared by Wilhelm Emrich.² In his introduction, he uses substantial parts of an earlier essay³ which reflects the most positive

¹Paulsen, pp.278-279.

²Carl Sternheim Gesamtwerk, ed. Wilhelm Emrich, 8 vols. (Neuwied am Rhein/Berlin, 1963-1968).

³Wilhelm Emrich, "Carl Sternheims 'Kampf der Metapher!' und für die 'eigene Nuance,' " Geist und Widergeist (Frankfurt a. M., 1965), pp.163-184.

critical approach which has been adopted in recent years.

Emrich begins by disclaiming that Sternheim is proposing any general answer to society's problems. He also denies that Sternheim is bent on portraying a superman. His main concern is to link social necessity and personal freedom, which he does through coldly objective analysis: "Er tritt gleichsam aus allen 'Ideen' unserer Epoche heraus. Er hat sein Bewusstsein völlig entmythologisiert und entideologisiert."¹

The ambiguity of approach which exemplifies criticism on Sternheim, Emrich attributes to Sternheim's own apparent ambivalence towards his characters: initially Sternheim would seem to be a satirist, as the title of his major play cycle--Aus dem bürgerlichen Heldenleben--would imply. Yet the reader soon realises that these figures are intended to really be seen as heroes. However, the reader finds these figures quite repugnant, yet is obliged to recognise that they portray bourgeois qualities. This has led to a recognition of Sternheim's satirical talent but to a damnation of his ideas. Emrich sees Sternheim's objective as the fulfillment of the self despite social pressures through recognition of each person's inviolable uniqueness: "Carl Sternheim . . . war . . . der unbeirrbaren Überzeugung, dass 'Gott,' der Schöpfer in jeden einzelnen Menschen eine nur ihm 'eigene' Bestimmung gelegt habe,

¹Emrich, p.164.

von Sternheim auch die 'eigene Nuance' genannt, die ihn von jedem anderen Menschen unterscheidet."¹

The manner in which Sternheim chooses to express his ideas is explained through references to Sternheim's critical essay Kampf der Metapher² in which he takes other writers to task for seducing people from reality by declaiming ideals of a greater humanity.³ In this context Emrich considers Sternheim's language to be a terse, direct creation to aid him in portraying reality, as opposed to "Dichtung," the creation of fantasies. Emrich also dismisses the charge of satirist made against Sternheim by citing Schiller's definition: ". . . in der Satire wird die Wirklichkeit als Mangel dem Ideal als der höchsten Realität gegenüber gestellt."⁴ Sternheim's continual emphasis on reality makes him the direct opposite of a satirist.

Emrich then shows that Sternheim emphasises the necessity of living truthfully to oneself by pointing out his insistence on the idea even if one has a "brutale Nuance," which is still preferable to suppressing one's individuality in favour of conformity. He even attempts to show that if

¹Emrich, p.166.

²GW, VI, 36-38.

³See especially GW, VI, 32-38.

⁴Quoted by Emrich, GW, I, 11.

one impedes the "eigene Nuance" of another, it will result in punishment. However, he omits to examine the possibility of the impedance itself being the expression of someone's "eigene Nuance" which would make for an ironic paradox.

Although one is exhorted to fulfill oneself, this is always within the context of one's class. Emrich then indicates how the different classes go about the task of their self-fulfillment. Subordinate figures are encouraged to pretend to follow society's rules and then ignore them at the right moment e.g. Theodor Maske (Die Hose), Wilhelm Ständer (Tabula Rasa). Among the bourgeoisie, Thekla Hicketier (Bürger Schippe) provides an excellent example of someone who avoids tragedy through awareness of her social limits in her affair with the Fürst. The main point is self-awareness, which leads to social awareness: ". . . einem Selbstverständnis des Menschen, in dem gesellschaftliche Verantwortung und Selbstverantwortung identisch geworden sind."¹ The people who understand themselves are always able to overcome those who employ a façade.

One of the leading Sternheim critics to emerge in recent years is Wolfgang Wendler, who has contributed a book² dealing largely with the prose works, and several major

¹Emrich, p.174.

²Wolfgang Wendler, Carl Sternheim: Weltvorstellung und Kunstprinzipien (Frankfurt a. M., 1966).

articles to Sternheim criticism. One of Wendler's most important essays¹ is concerned with an examination of Sternheim's philosophy of life as represented in his plays. The negative charge of satire is dismissed and Sternheim's aim is expressed thus: ". . . die Grundlagen der bürgerlichen Begriffswelt und der modernen Gesellschaft aufzudecken, und darüber hinaus zu Freiheit und unabhängiger Haltung aufzufordern."² This, in itself, is a common enough approach, but it is continued with more than usual thoroughness. The reason that Sternheim develops his concept of the "eigene Nuance" is that he foresaw the dangers of rejecting conventions only to replace them with equally structured beliefs of a new form. Not that Sternheim wished to implement chaos, but rather that he wished to see the recognition and appreciation of "reality," the true core of all things and people: "Vom Dichter gab es nichts, nur noch von Wirklichkeit hinzuzusetzen."³ Consequently, Sternheim attempts to portray social reality without judgements: the bourgeois dichotomy of preaching ideals whilst conducting business on a more prac-

¹ Wolfgang Wendler, "Wirklichkeit und Wunder im Werk Carl Sternheims," Grüsse, Hans Wolffheim zum sechzigsten Geburtstag (Festschrift), ed. Klaus Schröter (Frankfurt a. M., 1965), pp.113-132.

² Wendler, p.116.

³ Wendler, p.118. Taken from "Das gerettete Bürgertum," GW, VI, 46.

tical level; the bourgeois' battle with the proletarian.

Sternheim hoped that the emphasis on the individual would be displayed by the nobility who had emphasised the trait for centuries, and the proletariat which was sufficiently young to have formed few prejudices. His illustration of the former in Das Fossil borders ultimately on black comedy, the latter succumbs to the allure of the bourgeoisie in Bürger Schippel.

Wendler sees the clearest expression of Sternheim's intentions in Der entfesselte Zeitgenosse which contrasts the two fundamentally opposed ideas of reason ("Vernunft") and the irrational ("Wunder"). The heroine, who seems initially to be only capable of recognising reason, is made to see by the hero that life's richness lies in its unpredictability. This is not, however, a cry for irresponsible chaos, but rather for man to become aware of his boundless freedom.

Wendler relates "Wirklichkeit" and "Wunder" thus:

In der Wirklichkeit, die nicht gesellschaftliche Realität allein bedeutet, sondern umfassend als gesamte Schöpfung gemeint ist, sind alle Möglichkeiten, alles Wunderbare enthalten. Der Mensch soll sich als eine dieser Möglichkeiten, als selbst zum Wunder fähig erkennen und daraus seinen Stolz und seine Freiheit nehmen.¹

This represents the current situation in Sternheim

¹Wendler, p.131.

criticism. His reception has always been mixed, and even a quarter of a century after his death there has emerged no entirely satisfactory picture of Sternheim's work. It has become apparent that the conclusions of earlier critics were somewhat premature and superficial. Yet the publication of critical editions of Sternheim's work has not led to the formation of a clear picture of Sternheim's intentions. However, an examination of Sternheim's theoretical essays, in which he outlines his own artistic principles, provides an excellent point of reference from which to analyse Sternheim's literary output.

CHAPTER II

CARL STERNHEIM'S THEORETICAL WRITINGS

During the course of the nineteenth century a philosophical current may be traced from Kant through Hegel and on to Darwin and Marx which, in Carl Sternheim's eyes,¹ represents a gradual encroachment on the freedom of the individual. All these philosophers require man to submit himself to a greater force, be it ethical, economic, or biological, which represents immutable natural laws. The bourgeois society of the late nineteenth century had willingly traded a philosophical freedom for the wealth and power which the rapid industrialisation of Germany had created. There was a general interest in materialism and an appreciation of the benefits of the scientific approach to life. In literature this period is exemplified by Naturalism.

However, throughout this period, there were those who insisted upon the rights of the individual. One of the more eloquent pleaders for the rights to self-fulfillment was the Anarchist Max Stirner (1806-1856) who, in his work Der Einzige und sein Eigentum,² rejects the notion of higher causes or universal laws in favour of complete and utter con-

¹ See Europa; GW, V, 192ff.

² Max Stirner, Der Einzige und sein Eigentum (Leipzig, 1845).

centration on the self. Problems only arise when people try to establish personal relationships.

Although Sternheim could not agree with the complete rejection of human relationships, the emphasis on individualism leading to self-fulfillment was in accordance with his own feelings.¹ Similarly, Sternheim found much to admire in Nietzsche's trenchant attack on the bourgeoisie, even though he rejected the concept of the Wille zur Macht.² The real stimulus for Sternheim lay in the originality of Nietzsche's thought.

After his flirtation with Symbolism, Sternheim discovered the key to his own philosophical ideas in the works of Heinrich Rickert (1863-1936), particularly in his Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung.³ Rickert examines how man comes to terms with the diversity of his surroundings, and finds that there are two complementary aspects to this problem. Through the scientific approach man seeks to attain general truths, and through the historic approach man seeks to define the particular. Thus the former

¹ See Berlin oder Juste Milieu; GW, VI, 115.

² See Vorkriegseuropa im Gleichnis meines Lebens (Amsterdam, 1936), p.123. The Enrich edition, which appears in volume eight of the Gesamtwerk, was not available.

³ Heinrich Rickert, Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung (Tübingen, 1913).

leads to increased abstraction,¹ to the formation of general laws, the latter stresses individuality, and makes no attempt at value judgements: "Es ist . . . überhaupt nicht Sache der Geschichtswissenschaft, positiv oder negativ zu werten . . ."²

Rickert goes on to point out that man is under a moral obligation to fulfill his individuality: "Die oberste sittliche Pflicht des Menschen muss demnach darin bestehen, dass er seine Individualität ausbildet, und zwar so, dass sie zur Erfüllung der individuellen sittlichen Aufgaben, die ihm und nur ihm gestellt sind, geeignet wird."³

At the same time he re-emphasises that the scientific and historic approaches must be kept separate if one is to fulfill one's individuality. The suppression of the individual stems from the confusion of the two processes:

Sobald man also den Versuch aufgibt, den Inhalt der ethischen Normen aus naturwissenschaftlichen Gattungsbegriffen zu gewinnen, schliessen die allgemeingültigen ethischen Imperative das Recht der individuellen Persönlichkeit und ihrer Besonderheit nicht etwa aus, sondern es wird im Gegenteil vom Menschen

¹"Wir können daher geradezu sagen, dass die logische Vollkommenheit eines naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffes von dem Grade abhängt, in dem die empirische Anschauung aus seinem Inhalte entfernt ist."

Rickert, p.189.

²Rickert, p.189.

³Rickert, p.620.

Individualität und Besonderheit als Vorbedingung zur Erfüllung seiner allgemein sittlichen Pflichten gefordert.¹

As a result of this moral obligation, Rickert claims that just as man is subject to rational necessity, the hegemony of reason, when obeying the scientific approach, so is he subject to real necessity, a unique judgement only valid for the specific occasion, when employing the historic method.

Rickert foresaw that his emphasis on the fulfillment of the individual might lead to a confusion of freedom of action with pure hedonism, and consequently he incorporated a theory of values in his method:

So formal und allgemein jedoch der ethische Imperativ sein mag, so lässt er doch jedem seine Individualität, wenn nur diese Individualität im Dienste der Verwickelung von Gütern steht, an denen allgemeine Werte haften. Das ziel- und planlose 'Sichausleben' jedes beliebigen Stückchens individueller Wirklichkeit, das keine wertbezogene Einheit besitzt, ist freilich sittlich verwerflich, und für bedeutungslose individuelle Launen hat eine an der geschichtlichen Welt orientierte individualistische Ethik keinen Platz.²

Sternheim attended a course of lectures by Rickert at Freiburg in 1906. They had a profound effect upon him, and during the autumn of 1906, when he was in Bremen, Sternheim's

¹Rickert, pp.620-621.

²Rickert, pp.621-622.

correspondence reflected his preoccupation with Rickert's theories, which provided him with the basis for his own artistic programme.¹

In Sternheim's early dramas, there are traces of an interest in the individual. In an unpublished sketch of "Das eiserne Kreuz" (1902), a highly individualistic schoolteacher, Ellen Thielen, is trying to shake the mayor out of his bourgeois rut, and urges him to be himself: "Den letzten Schlag haben Sie nicht getan? Sie nicht. Zu eigenem sind Sie nicht gekommen."² The individual and the unique are also heavily emphasised in Sternheim's neoromantic drama Don Juan (1905):

Am Nächsten reizt mich nur das köstlich Eigene,
Nichtzuerratende an Weg und Ziel. (GW, VII, 690)

During his stay in Italy (1905-06), Sternheim had concerned himself with various aesthetic and ethical problems, and in Rickert he found the cadre for his solution to many of them. Here Sternheim discovered the justification for his emphasis on the unusual and individual:

¹ See the collected letters of Sternheim in GW, VI, 466ff.

² Quoted by Wolfgang Wendler from an unpublished manuscript in Marbach, dated 1902, in Carl Sternheim: Weltvorstellung und Kunstprinzipien (Frankfurt a. M., 1966), p. 231.

Für mich steht nun folgender Schluss fest: Die Kunst, die uns über die Natur hinaus eben das Gesamtbild der Welt in der Menschenseele schaffen soll, muss also auf dem Untergrund des Naturgesetzmässigen das Besondere darstellen.¹

What Sternheim found most exciting were the ethical implications of Rickert's work. Already in the works of Windelband (1848-1915), who belonged to the same school as Rickert, Sternheim had found justification for rejecting generally valid rules governing ethics: "Es kann keine allgemein gültigen Gesetze geben, denn jeder Mensch sieht in jedem Fall seine Pflicht anders als sie ein anderer sehen werde."²

Sternheim claims that as an ethical man acts according to the dictates of his conscience, if he does his duty, then he cannot conceive of his actions being immoral. Not only does this concept stress the individual, it also places an extraordinarily heavy burden upon his shoulders. Yet Sternheim goes still further. Although Rickert created his own system of values to ward off criticism, Sternheim chooses to dismiss this and to give to Art the sole function of reproducing the unique:

Während nun aber die historische Wissenschaft, diese gefundene Besonderheit einerseits anderen Besonder-

¹From an undated letter, Bremen, 1906. (GW, VI, 480).

²From an undated letter, February, 1906. (GW, VI, 474).

heiten zu vergleichen, in ein Wertverhältnis zu ihnen zu setzen, andererseits Folgen und Einwirkungen aus ihr wieder auf die nichtsichtbare Gesetzmässigkeit seiner Klasse nachzuweisen, mit einem Worte, tendenziöse Schlüsse aus ihr zu ziehen sucht, wohl gar eine Forderung aus ihr macht, begnügt sich die Kunst damit, sie einfach darzuthun.¹

Sternheim is able to do this because he believes that man is naturally able to create his own code of ethics without anyone telling him:

Ich meine aber: kann das Kind sich aus der gesetzmässigen Natur mit eigenen Sinn herausholen was ihm zum Mann- oder Weibwerden taugt, so der Erwachsene aus den ausgewählten freien Bildern der Kunst, was ihn zum Menschen machen kann.

In diesem Sinne erblicke ich die unvergleichliche erzieherische Aufgabe der Kunst für das Menschen-geschlecht: einfache Spiegelung des irgendwie hervorragenden ohne die Spur bewusster sittlicher Predigt, in der ich vielmehr den schlimmsten Feind jeder æsthetischen Wirkung sche.²

This exciting, if somewhat idealistic, view of the rôle of Art sufficed to guide Sternheim towards appropriate subject matter and to clarify his own thoughts. However, once these ideas were exposed to public view in his plays, Sternheim was obliged to clarify his position in order to counteract the heavy criticism with which he was faced.

One of the first critical essays that Sternheim

¹From an undated letter, Bremen, 1906. (GW, VI, 481).

²From an undated letter, Bremen. (GW, VI, 482).

published after the appearance of Die Hose in 1911 was an appreciation of Molière.¹ Sternheim, who closely identified with Molière, claims that Molière's genius lay in recognising that the bourgeois society of his time was straying from its true self through apeing the nobility: ". . . es stand der umfassende Komplex tüchtigen Menschentums, den man Bürgerlichkeit nennt, in Gefahr, durch Nachahmung der Talente höherer Kreise die Hochhaltung vor seinen eigenen Tugenden zu verlieren" (GW, VI, 16).

Thus the dramatist should try and show society its foibles in order that society may correct them. In his essay "Gedanken über das Wesen des Dramas"² Sternheim makes this point by comparing the dramatist to the doctor: "Der dramatische Dichter ist der Arzt am Leibe seiner Zeit. Alle Eigenschaften des idealen Menschen blank und strahlend zu erhalten, ist ihm unabweisbar Pflicht" (GW, VI, 19). Although the dramatist must be aware of these ideal qualities, he must conceive of an amusing and interesting way of presenting them. In Sternheim's view, this is achieved in comedy by exaggerating the defects of the "hero" to obsessive proportions:

¹Carl Sternheim, "Molière der Bürger," Blätter des deutschen Theaters, No.17 (April, 1912), 259-260. (GW, VI, 16-17).

²Carl Sternheim, "Gedanken über das Wesen des Dramas," Die Argonauten, I (1914), 238-239. (GW, VI, 19-20).

"Er [i.e. the dramatist] kann die moribunde Eigenschaft in den Helden selbst senken und ihn mit fanatischer Eigenschaft von ihr besessen sein lassen . . ." (GW, VI, 19).

At this stage in his career, Sternheim had explained that the function of the dramatist was to make people aware of their faults in order that they might correct them.

Bearing in mind his earlier statement that he did not wish to preach to anyone, it is not surprising that Sternheim chose to express himself indirectly through comedy and that he was loath to overemphasise the moral conclusions of his work, which would imply that he was lecturing.

However, by 1918, when the majority of his play cycle was completed, Sternheim was under mounting pressure to defend them against charges of negativism and immorality; a task which he undertook with enthusiasm. In his essay "Kampf der Metapher"¹ Sternheim claims that the artist should not gloss over reality by preaching idealistic concepts, but that he should show how best people might fulfill themselves by being true to themselves:

Anstelle der uns angewiesenen Erde soll kein Paradies sie [i.e.'Dichtung'] "dichten." Sichtbar Vorhandenes soll sie nur am rechten Ende packen, krüde, dass nichts Wesentliches fehlt, und es zu Formen verdichten, die der Epoche Essentielles späteren Geschlechtern festhalten.

¹Carl Sternheim, "Kampf der Metapher," Prosa (Sammelband), 1918. (GW, VI, 32-38).

Keinem Lebendigen soll der Dichter das einzig lohnende Ziel, eigener, originaler, einmaliger Natur zu leben, damit verstellen, dass mit seit ewigen Zeiten klischierten Melodien er "höhere Menschheit" vorharft, die diejenigen geringsschätzen, die mit mir eine vorhandene wirklich kennen und mit Inbrunst lieben. (GW, VI, 37-38)

Yet even such an explanation as this was misconstrued as incitement to immoral conduct, and Sternheim was obliged to defend himself again in the postscript to Ulrike, a prose story which was widely viewed as being immoral because of misinterpretations of the underlying philosophy. What really angered Sternheim was that he was trying to help people enrich their lives and the critics said that he was only besmirching them:

Ich entfachte zu keiner Erziehung; im Gegenteil warnte ich vor einer Verbesserung göttlicher Welt durch den Bürger und machte ihm Mut zu seinen sogenannten Lastern, mit denen er Erfolge errang, und riet ihm, meiner Verantwortung bewusst, Begriffe, die einseitig nach sittlichem Verdienst messen, als unerheblich und lebensschwächend endlich auch aus seiner Terminologie zu entfernen.¹

In his essay "Das gerettete Bürgertum"² Sternheim points out that his intentions would become quite clear if his critics bothered to read what he had written:

¹Carl Sternheim, postscript to Ulrike (München, 1918), pp.41-42. (GW, VI, 50-51).

²Carl Sternheim, "Das gerettete Bürgertum," Die Aktion, VIII (1918), Nos.1 and 2, 15-17. (GW, VI, 45-47).

Also nicht Ironie und Satire, die als meine Absicht der flüchtige Reporter festgestellt hatte und Menge nachschwatzte, sondern vor allgemeiner Tat aus meinen Schriften schon die Lehre: dass Kraft sich nicht verliert, muss auf keinen überkommenen Rundgesang doch auf seinen frischen Einzelton der Mensch nur hören, ganz unbesorgt darum, wie Bürgersinn seine manchmal brutale Nuance nennt.

Einmaliger unvergleichlicher Natur zu leben, riet jedem Lebendigen ich, damit keine Ziffer, sondern Schwung zu ihrer Unabhängigkeit entschlossener Individuen Gemeinschaft bedeute, mit dem aus der Nation und der Menschheit ein Ziel allein erreichbar ist.

(GW, VI, 47)

The difficulty was that although the public realised that Sternheim was attacking them in his plays, they did not understand what he was trying to put forward as an alternative. There appeared to be no fixed moral point of reference but only an exhortation to be true to oneself and to fulfill oneself, which in most people's eyes appeared to be an invitation to anarchy.¹

Sternheim responded with a vitriolic attack on the Germans and their way of life entitled Berlin oder Juste Milieu.² In this work Sternheim traces Germany's history from unification to the post-war revolution, and mordantly attributes the decline of Germany to the increasing moral decadence of the period. In conclusion, Sternheim outlines

¹Two plays, Die Hose and Die Kassette, were banned by the censor. Several other plays were the cause of numerous theatre-scandals, in particular Die Kassette.

²Carl Sternheim, Berlin oder Juste Milieu (München, 1920). (GW, VI, 105-171).

his own philosophy which, he claims, would have saved Germany from its fate if it had been followed. This outline provides the most lucid statement of Sternheim's views:

Es ist eine Welt von D e n k - und B e z i e h u n g s - i n h a l t e n innerhalb menschlichen Bewusstseins so zu unterscheiden, dass Denkinhalte und die aus ihnen gewonnenen U r t e i l e, Ewiges, elementar Notwendiges von den Erscheinungen aussagend, ohne Relation zu irgendeinem anderen, stets unverändert, statisch und an sich gelten: Baum ist grün. Wasser=H₂O.

Entgegengesetzt B e g r i f f e, aus Beziehungs-inhalten stammend, gerade nicht das Konstante, Ansich des Phänomens, sondern sein aus Bindung mit anderem und Reaktion auf anderes stets neu Entstehendes bezeichnen: dieses Kind gehorcht. (GW, VI, 169)

Sternheim then goes on to emphasise that only by seizing the opportunities offered by the world of the "Beziehungs-inhalte" can a person attain self-fulfillment:

Diese zeitgenössische, momentane Welt aber besitzt der Mensch immer von neuem neu und unabhängig von Vernunft nur durch Kraft der V i s i o n Und zwar nach seinen visionären Fähigkeiten in abgestuften Graden jeder andere Mensch immer anders, so dass auf diesem Gebiet der Beziehungen jeder historische Vergleich sinnlos ist. Erst durch diese individuell gestufte Möglichkeit zum immer verschiedenen Besitz des "Beziehungsganzen" ist der neugeborene Mensch mit einem eigenen unvergleichlichen Schicksal frei, das heisst ganz seine eigene Nüance! (GW, VI, 170)

So far Sternheim has done little more than restate Rickert's beliefs as outlined in Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung, but now his argument undergoes a change in emphasis which leads to obviously ambiguous possibilities. Sternheim claims the existence of

the "Welt der Beziehungs inhalte" has been overlooked by the majority of people, because those people who dictate the attitudes which society adopts (what Sternheim calls "das Juste Milieu") have forced this world into the rigidly static "Welt der Denkinhalte." In Sternheim's terms, the "Freiheit des Schicksals" which the "Beziehungs inhalte" convey has been sacrificed to the "Diktatur der Notwendigkeit" of the "Denk- inhalte."

Sternheim cannot conceive how man, who is depressed by the necessity of the world of "Denkinhalte," can willingly submit his world of "Beziehungs inhalte" to the same fate: "Aus beider Seiten Gleichgewicht allein, indem man abwechselnd von wirklicher Welt besessen und mögliche Welt besitzend ist, kann man lebendig funktionieren" (GW, VI, 171).

Two objections raise themselves at this juncture: how does one know always to distinguish between the one world and the other, and what happens when two "Nuancen" clash?

To the first question Sternheim replies that one must look to one's conscience, and then continues with a string of rhetoric which does no more than underline the lack of clarity:

Gewissen aber ist Entscheidung in mir: muss ich, eines Augenblicks tiefstem Sinn zu entsprechen, in ihm besitzen oder in ihm besessen sein? Ist Freiheit oder Abhängigkeit in solcher Lage echteres Leben? Und: wie vor funktionellem Leben Wille zur Freiheit, ist vor logischen Zwängen Unterwerfung in Unfreiheit auch noch

der sittlichere Standpunkt, wie des Menschen Unabhängigkeitswille nicht Hochmut und dionysische Extravaganz, sondern Regulativ zu dem sonst über Schöpfung verhängten, natürlichen Unabwendbaren ist. (GW, VI, 171)

If anything, this weakens Sternheim's case by making the world of "Beziehungs inhalte" no more than a necessary counteraction to the depressing world of "Denk inhalte."

The second question returns to the problem of how to avoid anarchy if everyone is bent on self-fulfillment.

Sternheim's reply is either casual sophistry or naive optimism. He proposes a natural socialism ("natürlicher Sozialismus")¹ by which people would naturally avoid limiting the freedom of others, because they were too aware and proud of their own, individual freedom. Any intolerant behaviour could only result from someone having moral preconceptions for which they claimed general validity, or, as Sternheim prefers to call them, bourgeois prejudices. Wendler provides a judicious comment to this argument: "Das Verfahren Sternheims ist immer das gleiche. Wo er den erwünschten Idealzustand des Menschen und der menschlichen Gemeinschaft bedroht sieht, behauptet er, dass der Grund im Festhalten an bürgerlichen Denkvoraussetzungen liege."²

¹ See Europa; GW, V, 414f.

² Wendler, p.49.

Sternheim's last major critical work, his autobiographical Vorkriegseuropa im Gleichnis meines Lebens,¹ does no more than reiterate the case outlined above.

It is evident from the theoretical writings of Sternheim that he had formulated his fundamental ideas at an early stage in his career. Although he was obliged to come to the defence of his beliefs on more than one occasion in his lifetime, he never clearly refuted several of the basic criticisms that his ideas provoked. Nevertheless, there is sufficient evidence of a clearly defined programme of philosophical beliefs, however deficient they may appear, which were closely connected with Sternheim's literary output.

It now remains to be seen how these philosophical ideas were expressed in Sternheim's plays and whether he was more successful in defending himself against his critics.

¹Carl Sternheim, Vorkriegseuropa im Gleichnis meines Lebens (Amsterdam, 1936).

CHAPTER III

CARL STERNHEIM'S PLAY-CYCLE AUS DEM BÜRGERLICHEN
HELDENLEBEN¹

a) Two early plays: Bürger Schippel² and Die Kassette³

Although the cycle begins with Die Hose⁴ (1911), it will be more valuable to study Die Hose together with the three other plays forming the *Maske*-tetralogy in a later section in order to show more clearly how Sternheim's thought developed.

The two plays under consideration here form the second and third chronologically speaking in the cycle. Die Kassette appeared in print in 1912, a year after its première at the "Deutsches Theater" in Berlin. Bürger Schippel was published in 1913 and was first performed in the same year.

The two basic forces in Die Kassette are sex and money, both of which are inextricably entangled. At the beginning of the play, Heinrich Krull, a middle-aged schoolmaster, is just about to return from his honeymoon with his second wife,

¹All primary material is quoted from Carl Sternheim. Gesamtwerk, ed. Wilhelm Emrich, 8 vols. (Neuwied am Rhein/Berlin, 1963-67).

²GW, I, 467-557.

³GW, I, 361-466.

⁴GW, I, 21-136.

Fanny, the younger sister of his lately deceased first wife. Lydia, Krull's daughter, is talking to Emma, the maid, whilst preparing the house for the return of the newly-weds. Lydia reiterates her aunt Elsbeth's attack on Fanny: "Mit Kleidern und Krimskrams hat sie Vater umgarnt, ihn bis ins Mark mit Liebe vergiftet, wie Tante sagt" (I, ii). As she speaks Emma puts up a sign reading "Herzlich willkommen der jungen Frau." The deception has already begun.

With the return of Heinrich and Fanny the first crisis occurs. The initial round of greetings is dominated by Krull's repeated enquiries after "Tante Elsbeth," which recall Orgon's obsessive "Et Tartuffe?" in Molière's Tartuffe. Elsbeth has chosen to remain in her room as she considers Krull should come to greet her to show her proper respect. Krull does not hesitate, but his warm embrace is met by Elsbeth's testy remark: "Du bist nicht rasiert" (I, iv).

The two women, Fanny and Elsbeth, reveal their basic enmity straight away during a discussion of Elsbeth's newly taken photograph. Fanny, in characteristic fashion, expresses her opinion quite openly. Elsbeth avoids discussing the photograph by turning the conversation into an attack on Fanny's extravagance. Fanny's innocent simplicity contrasts sharply with the deviousness of her enemy, which soon reveals itself to be no more than the attempt of an aging woman to retain the attention of Krull in the face of Fanny's obvious sexual allure.

If there was any doubt as to whether love or money figured more prominently in Krull's mind, it is dispelled when Fanny's overtures fail to displace his consideration of his obsession:

Krull: Ist Welt, Welt schön! Versinken . . .
Sie liegen sich in Armen.

Krull nach einem Augenblick: Was mag sie besitzen?
(I, v)

When Elsbeth tells him at the end of the act that it is 190,000 marks, twice as much as he had imagined, Fanny's seductive approach is repelled with a growling "Schweig!"

The enmity between Fanny and Elsbeth is well illustrated in act two, when Elsbeth peeps through the keyhole to Krull's room and gives vent to her sexual jealousy: "Pfui! Wie ich das Frauenzimmer hasse!" (II, i). Throughout the act Elsbeth fosters Krull's interest in her wealth and encourages his hopes to become obsessions.

The interrelation of sex and money is reflected, on a superficial level, in the interest which the amorous photographer Seidenschnur pays to Lydia when he learns she may inherit Elsbeth's wealth.

It is evident that all the characters practice deception to some degree or other, but the extent of the characters' hypocrisy becomes clearer in the course of act three. Fanny has had enough of Elsbeth's arrogant domination of the household and she asks Krull to forgo the inheritance:

Fanny: Am liebsten verzichtete ich auf die Erbschaft.

Wieviel Jahre demütigen Wartens . . .

Krull erregt: Da hat man's! So sündhaften Bafel spricht nur ein Weib. Das ist ungeheuerlich, widerwärtig, weil gegen Vernunft. (III, iii)

Krull's rejection of Fanny's proposal is based on reason, which immediately indicates that Krull is confusing the laws governing personal relationships ("Beziehungs inhalte") with the immutable natural laws ("Denkinhalte"). Krull maintains that his lack of capital prevents him from being rebellious towards Elsbeth. He realises that his behaviour is an obsequious courting of Elsbeth's favour, but he is prepared to pursue it for the eventual financial gain:

Krull: . . . Unsereinem sind cäsarische Instinkte untersagt. Wir müssen uns strecken, anpassen; das ist Weltordnung. Den habe ich gern, der gegen sie murrt. Welches Kapital von Schmeicheleien und Erniedrigungen habe ich an die wracke Fregatte gewandt, und bin ich weniger als du, mein Stolz geringer?

Fanny: Mit deinem Gehalt haben wir unser Auskommen.

Deine Pension reicht für Lydia und mich.

Krull: Ich also darf mich schinden, damit Madame ihren Stolz bläht. (III, iii)

Krull's objection to Fanny's arguments are twofold: in the first place he recognises a natural law which gives precedence to wealth, and in the second place he considers his treatment of Elsbeth as an investment. Fanny's objections to this are quite valid. Even if what Krull said were true, it is more than likely that their marriage would improve if he paid less attention to Elsbeth. Fanny's rejection of the in-

heritage is also a rejection of Krull's statement that one must give precedence to the whims of wealthier people. The investment in flattery is no more than an investment and it does not guarantee a return. Krull must realise the flimsiness of his arguments, as the indignant accusatory response to Fanny's suggestion implies, but he is so practiced in deception that it is all too easy for him to parry her remarks with clichéd expressions of indignation.

If Krull was a victim of his own self-deception, then one could conceivably sympathise with him, but he soon reveals that all his actions are prompted by boundless egotism. Fanny proclaims her love for Krull, and tells him that she is only trying to protect him from the scheming Elsbeth. This is just what Elsbeth had said about Fanny (II, vi), and Krull replies with unabashed cynicism:

Krull: Sie [i.e. Elsbeth] behauptet gleiches gegen dich. Irrt euch nicht. Nicht sie, nicht du - ich selbst bin Anfang und Ende, dich und sie, tretet ihr mir ein Tittel zu nah, zerschmettre ich. (III, iii)

If this is what Krull believes, then he gives the impression of being true to Sternheim's principles of self-fulfillment: he will not let anyone interfere with his plans to satisfy his own needs and desires. However, Sternheim has created a paradox because Krull's self-fulfillment takes the form of achieving true bourgeois capitalist status. The energy which should be directed towards satisfying the

"eigene Nuance" is being perverted to purely materialistic ends as his eulogy to Elsbeth indicates:

Krull: . . . das Wesen deines Schatzes bin ich, und die Frage ist, amüsieren dich meine Kapriolen hinreichend zu vier Prozent? Doch ich schwöre mit der Kraft meiner Seele: nicht vergeblich erkannte ich das; bleibe nicht müssig, sondern folge dir; und mein Stolz soll sein, wo du mässig geniesst, muss mein Genuss an meinem Objekten über Grenzen unmässig werden. (IV, vii)

Every move that Krull makes is calculated but Sternheim demands a constant spontaneity in reaction to events to maintain an entirely natural manner. Fanny is the only natural person in the house--Lydia is not calculating but her romantic pretensions are a façade--but she is doomed to a tragic marriage to a man who has abandoned her within days of their return from the honeymoon in order to court the favours of her wealthy aging aunt.

It seems momentarily that there is still hope for Fanny when Krull loses his temper with Elsbeth (III, iv), but he quickly regains his composure, and when reconciled with Elsbeth, he agrees that she has a right to indulge her selfish whims:

Elsbeth: Ich will Genuss aus meinem Reichtum.
 Krull: Kein entschlossenes Gemüt verzichtete darauf.
 Nicht Niedrigkeit der Gesinnung ist es, considiere ich ihn, doch Vernunft, Einordnung in Weltgesetze. (III, vi)

Once again Krull concedes that the rich have a right

to be considered before others. Elsbeth concludes her will in the following scene (III, vii), and Krull's investment is shown to be completely profitless.

While Seidenschnur's interest in Lydia has been increased after hearing of the strong-box, Krull has allowed the box and its contents, which Elsbeth, with bitter irony, has given him to guard, to usurp Fanny in his affections:

Krull: Im Bett allein, nachts habe ich dich, besitze ich dich in Ruh. (IV, ii)

Fanny is obliged to recognise her defeat by Elsbeth when she looks through the keyhole and sees her place in the bed occupied by the strong-box, a grotesque symbol of her aged spinster vanquisher. Now it is Fanny who feels the pangs of frustration:

Fanny: . . . Grau ist er geworden. Warst du nicht jünger, als du mit Ungestüm vor wenigen Wochen mich begehrtest, rasend mich hattest? War das ein anderer Mann? War ich, war er verzaubert? Was soll ich tun? Ich bin dir nicht gram . . . nur hungrig. (IV, v)

Meanwhile Seidenschnur has met Lydia on her bedroom balcony, and continued his seduction. Seidenschnur takes his leave only to bump into Fanny. Immediately he seizes the opportunity to declare his love and Fanny accedes to his pleas in order to still her own frustrated desires: "Mein junges Herz erwürgt. Ich muss leben!" (IV, vi). The sexual roundabout is completed by Krull's arrival outside Fanny's

door where he stops to momentarily apologise before moving on to Elsbeth's door to gleefully express his joy:

Krull: Gute Nacht, kleine schüchterne Rentiere. Zwanzig, fünfzig Prozent Dividende will ich! Meine Leute sollen Kopf stehen. Prostitution hahahaha!! (IV, vii)

By now every member of the family has undergone a radical change in his sexual relationships--even Elsbeth has symbolically usurped Fanny--since the introduction of the strong-box into the house. It promised to be a source of pleasure and comfort, and indeed it is for its owner, but it has caused nothing but perversion and sorrow to the others.

The fifth act offers a commentary on the situation in the preceding acts before attaining its ironic conclusion. Lydia and Seidenschnur return from their honeymoon, and are assailed for their failure to keep the family informed of their holiday. Seidenschnur immediately objects that he had no time for such matters: "Ich war mit mir selbst und seelischen Erlebnissen zu ausserordentlich beschäftigt" (V, i). Seidenschnur did not have time for anyone else for he was too busy drinking in the glories of the Italian Renaissance, which have convinced him that his true career is to be an artist. Needless to say his "Italian experience" included the seduction of several ladies. Lydia, for her part, spent the time being sick and suffering from headaches, mainly in an effort to temper the desires of her ardent husband.

Krull does not accept Seidenschnur's arguments, and insists that he is obliged to take them into consideration as he is now a member of the family. This is angrily rejected by Seidenschnur: "Zum Teufel, das ist Angriff auf meine Freiheit" (V, i). The difference between the two men is made explicit by the juxtaposition of their arguments a few lines later:

Seidenschnur: Aber ich bin nicht zu Ihrem Vergnügen auf der Welt.

Krull: Man muss älter sein als Sie, Beziehungen von Mensch zu Mensch im Kern zu erkennen. Halten wir uns an äusserlich Sichtbares . . . (V, i)

Both men--like all of Sternheim's characters--are egotists, but Seidenschnur still insists on the right to fulfill himself regardless of other people. Krull's egotism is careful and calculated to accord with the deceptive world that he inhabits. In Sternheim's terms, Seidenschnur is a commendable person if only because he acts entirely on impulse. Even his marriage proposal was a spontaneous reaction to explain his presence on Krull's balcony in the middle of the night.

In a subsequent scene Elsbeth, now sure of her victory tries to talk to Fanny, and in the course of the tense conversation, their basic difference is given acute expression:

Elsbeth: Hätten wir nichts miteinander zu besprechen?
Vor fünfundzwanzig Jahren, Fanny . . .

Fanny: Das liegt weit zurück. Vergangenheit hat wenig Wert.

Elsbeth: Sehr wahr. Nur was jede noch zu leben hat . . .

Elsbeth has only the past to dwell on and the security of the inheritance, which depends upon her death. Fanny has everything to live for.

When the play concludes with Krull and Seidenschnur discussing the values of "Bürgerwohlstand" (V, v), which are, of course, for them quite illusory, one's sympathy is naturally extended towards Fanny, who can now only snatch at life through clandestine meetings with Seidenschnur. To a lesser extent, the perversion of Seidenschnur to the mediocre and pathetic level of Krull is sad, for Seidenschnur had revealed an eagerness to enjoy life, albeit at a very superficial level, which marked him as someone bent on satisfying his "eigene Nuance."

Die Kassette illustrates the corrupting influence of money. Apart from Elsbeth, who remains completely hypocritical in her dealings throughout, all the characters are changed for the worse by the arrival of the strong-box: Krull's concern for Elsbeth becomes a maniac obsequiousness which distorts all his values. Krull's obsession leads to Fanny's adultery with Seidenschnur. Thus the two people who represent Sternheim's beliefs achieve sexual satisfaction at the expense of the one person who is consciously suppressing his "eigene Nuance." However, the stress in the play is put on the negativism of the characters' behaviour which, by and

large, runs counter to Sternheim's dictates on self-fulfillment.

Bürger Schippel provides a similar conclusion and contains a parallel couple to Seidenschnur and Fanny. The main character, Paul Schippel, is a flute-player in a beer parlour, who possesses a superb tenor voice. When the tenor in a local quartet dies shortly before the important song-contest for the Prince's golden wreath, they are obliged to consider asking the proletarian bastard Schippel to join them. The deceased tenor, Naumann, was the fiancé of Thekla Hicketier, the sister of the quartet's leader Tilman Hicketier. The play begins with Tilman's wife, Jenny sympathising with Thekla, who, far from being grieved, is glad to be rid of Naumann because of his lack of sexual vitality: alone on a warm June evening, Naumann had failed to try anything when Thekla was throbbing with anticipation: ". . . Das Wort musste er sprechen, Zeichen geben, ich hätte ihn überschüttet. Blödsinnig schwieg er. Seine Augen eines Kalbes auf Stielen" (I, i). In the ensuing discussion, Thekla shows herself to be a hot-blooded woman feverishly awaiting her romantic hero. When Jenny mentions the romantic interest of the two other members of the quartet, Krey and Wolke, Thekla scornfully dismisses them.

The three remaining members of the quartet return from Naumann's funeral to meet Schippel and give him an interview, which is conducted in such a condescending manner that

Schippel's initial politeness soon turns to anger, and he storms off.

The rest of the act is concerned with Thekla in one way or another. Wolke and Krey discuss her because Wolke, who loves her, perversely insists on trying to persuade Krey that he loves her too. If Krey accepts the fact, which he is most unwilling to do, then Wolke can magnanimously step back in favour of his friend and thus avoid the dreaded sexual confrontation (which Naumann failed so miserably).

The unexpected arrival of the Prince after a minor accident near the house leads to his meeting Thekla, whom he evidently finds very attractive. In consequence, Thekla receives a message from the Prince arranging a rendez-vous for that evening, which, as it happens, coincides with the newly arranged audition of Schippel. The contrast between the devious manipulations of Wolke and the direct, forceful action of the Prince underlines the distinction between the dishonest bourgeois and the natural aristocrat, who does not attempt to still the dictates of his "eigene Nuance."

The third act begins with the climatic juxtaposition of all Thekla's suitors; all the male characters in the play can be related to Thekla in some degree of sexuality. The scene is the garden where the Prince has arrived and is calling up to Thekla's bedroom. As he persuades Thekla to descend the ladder, a superbly ironic counterpoint is offered by the singing of the quartet from the living-room.

Tilmann has always kept a brotherly eye on Thekla in order to ensure her smooth passage into the comfortable status of a bourgeois wife. Wolke loves Thekla but is quite incapable of ever expressing anything so direct. Krey has become an unwilling suitor. Schippel too longs to possess the woman who spat upon him as a child in order to feel he has attained the desired status of being a bourgeois. All four are singing hunting-songs and love-songs expressing the joys of a natural life which their society absolutely forbids, as Thekla descends to her romantic hero and willingly surrenders her virginity. Thus the Prince, who is true to his "eigene Nuance" and perfectly natural in expressing his feelings, is the victor over the other men, whose desire for Thekla stemmed from motives other than love.

After the audition is successfully concluded, Schippel returns to Hicketier's house, and discovering the ladder against the wall, he climbs it in order to demand Thekla's hand. Incensed, Hicketier descends to deal with Schippel, and discovers Thekla with the Prince.

The course of events is dictated by the external paraphernalia which determine the world of the bourgeois. Thus when Hicketier decides that Thekla must be quickly married off to the lowly Schippel, he tries to conceal the true reason for choosing him by creating suitable parentage for him. All Hicketier's actions are prompted by the necessity to keep up appearances. Similarly, the reluctant Krey prepares to

ask for Thekla's hand once he has seen the outer symbol--their initials carved on the elm tree--even though he is fully aware that Wolke has created it.

Schippel arrives and hears the news from Hicketier. His reactions are too arrogant for Hicketier who in a fit of pique informs Schippel that he is receiving "second-hand goods":

Hicketier, mit dröhnendem Lachen: Es lacht über dich Lumpensammler, der du glaubst, ein Kleinod aufzupicken. Höhere Gesetze ducken dich: was unsereins dir gewährt, ist höchsten Glanzes verlustig . . .
Schippel prallt zurück.

Hicketier: Verlor, für dich noch tausendmal zu gut, an einen Besseren die Blüte. (IV, iv)

Now Schippel uses the principles of his newly acquired status to reject Hicketier's offer: "Glaube ich nicht, dass der in mir wurzelnde Begriff von Mannesehre mir erlaubt, die Werbung länger aufrecht zu erhalten" (IV, iv). Scarcely has Hicketier recovered from the shock when Krey arrives to ask for Thekla's hand, to which Hicketier readily agrees.

Although the quartet successfully retain the golden wreath, the event is marred by Krey challenging Schippel to a duel after the latter informs the newly announced fiancé of his intended's adventure, or, as Schippel phrases it in a doleful monologue prior to the duel: "Weil ich dem aufgeblasenen Bräutigam andeutete, seine gloriose Braut habe eher getechtelmechtelt" (V, ii).

The duel, which concludes the play, is a reductio ad

absurdum of the formal pretentiousness of the characters.

Both participants are scared out of their wits: Schippel tries to run off but is dragged back by the doctor, Krey quakes with fear and continually mutters: "Ich lebte so gemütlich." Neither of them are familiar with the proceedings, but, what is more important, neither of them really believe in the ideas of honour which they are supposedly defending. Like their whole existence, this is an empty parody of reality.

As it transpires, Schippel accidentally gives Krey a flesh-wound, which suffices for Hicketier to see Schippel as a true bourgeois who has just magnanimously spared the life of his opponent:

Hicketier: Dieser Tag soll Folgen haben. Das Andenken an das von Ihnen Geleistete darf nicht verloren gehen, und ich setze mich dafür ein, dass Ihnen die höheren Segnungen des Bürgertums voll und ganz zuteil werden. Auf Wiedersehen, lieber Herr Schippel.

Er zieht mit Anstand den Hut vor ihm.

Exit.

Schippel in voller Sonne allein, verbirgt überwältigt sein Gesicht in Händen: Die Segnungen voll und ganz-zuviel.

Leise und mit Glückseligkeit: Du bist Bürger, Paul.

Er macht vor sich selbst eine ausladende Reverenz. (v, v)

As long as Schippel can give the appearance of measuring up to bourgeois ideals, then Hicketier gladly accepts him, for, as Sternheim shows, the very essence of bourgeois standards is its emptiness. Hence the irony of Schippel's achievement: he has moved from being an honest proletarian to

a dishonest bourgeois.

Once again, nobody really wins, although the romance of the Prince and Thekla provides a defiant assertion of natural feeling in the midst of hypocrisy and deception. The lack of spontaneity and the perverse adherence to the outer form of things in place of their substance leads to a dull and artificial life, in which the principal aim is conformity. In other terms, the ossification of the world of "Denkinhalte" is allowed to exclude the basic vitality of the world of "Beziehungs inhalte."

Only Schippe--apart from Thekla and the Prince--betrays any enthusiasm, but, as in the case of Krull, the vitality which should be used to express the "eigene Nuance" is diverted to the acquisition of middle-class acceptability.

b) The Maske tetralogy

The four plays delineating the fortunes of the Maske family span the whole of the cycle Aus dem bürgerlichen Heldenleben: the cycle begins with Die Hose (1911) and continues in quick succession with Der Snob¹ (1914) and 1913² (1915). The cycle is concluded with the last play of the

¹GW, I, 137-216.

²GW, I, 217-294.

tetralogy, Das Fossil¹ (1925). The change in emphasis among the characters from one play to the next gives a lucid indication of the development of Sternheim's thought.

In the first play, Die Hose, the action is set in the petty bourgeois world of Theobald Maske, a minor government official, and his wife, Luise. The play begins with Theobald lecturing Luise after she has just had her drawers fall down in the park whilst attending a royal procession. Theobald is incensed and attributes this scandalous affair to Luise's romantic behaviour:

Theobald: . . . Sternguckerin.

Ausser sich

Wo ist die Welt?

Er packt sie beim Kopf und schlägt ihn auf den Tisch: Unten, im Kochtopf, auf dem mit Staub bedeckten Boden deiner Stube, nicht im Himmel, hörst du? (I, i)

Theobald believes that everything and everybody has a definite place in the world, and that all problems can be related to a failure to recognise this fact: ". . . Könnte ich dir doch begreiflich machen, jedes Ärgernis der Welt stammt aus dem Nichtzusammengehen zweier ein Ding bildenden Faktoren" (I, i). In his case they are his official position and Luise's appearance. Theobald's mundanity is given further utterance in a pronouncement on one's function in life:

¹GW, I, 295-360.

" . . . man soll sich sehr auf das Seine beschränken, es festhalten und darüber wachen . . ." (I, i).

Thus a clear picture has emerged of Theobald as a small-minded bourgeois official who is concerned with ensuring that his own little world is allowed to continue undisturbed.

However, the events in the park have their consequences as Luise was observed by two people, both of whom intend to further their acquaintance. The first is Frank Scarron, who bursts into the flat and asks whether the advertised rooms for rent are still available. Almost in the same breath he passionately declares his love for Luise. Alarmed and excited, Luise persuades him to leave and return when Theobald is back to verify the availability of the rooms.

Any doubts which Luise may have about taking a lover are dispensed by her neighbour, Gertrud Deuter, a frustrated spinster, who sees an outlet for her pent-up feelings in furthering Luise's adultery. Her enthusiasm decides Luise: " . . . Ja, ich will aus diesem Dienst, diesen Zügeln und Banden, von diesem aufgehobenen Finger zur Freiheit fort " (I, vi). Gertrud not only gives her moral support, she also prepares some suitably seductive apparel for her.

Theobald returns to lunch with Benjamin Mandelstam, barber and avid Wagnerian, who also seeks a room in the apartment, having observed the incident in the park.

During lunch, Theobald satisfies himself that Mandel-

stam would make a suitable tenant, and in doing so, Theobald, who is unaware of either applicant's intentions, arranges for them to share the available space and thereby maximise his profits.

Scarron loses no time in declaring his passionate feelings for Luise once more. He kneels before her expressing ecstatic phrase after ecstatic phrase until Luise, swooning with desire, gasps: "Lass mich dein sein!" (II, iv). Now Scarron is ready, but not to make love, only to write: "Tisch, Feder an dein Wesen heran; schlichter Natur angenähert, muss das Kunstwerk gelingen" (II, iv). The whole falsity of Scarron's life is revealed in this phrase; he can never be natural but only approach that state and then retreat to his false world of Art. Luise is left frustrated whilst Scarron writes closeted in his bedroom.

In the ensuing dinner conversation, the irony abounds as the impotent Scarron champions the cause of Nietzsche. Theobald is led to explain his philosophy of life, which Scarron views with condescension:

Scarron: Immerhin leben Sie nach bestimmtem Schema.

Theobald: Schema F, wenn Sie wollen.

Scarron: Das heisst, essen, schlafen, schreiben Akten ab? Und wohin soll das führen?

Theobald: In die Pension, so Gott will. (III, i)

When Scarron objects and asks Theobald how he can willingly limit himself to such primitive objectives, the latter

replies simply: "Ist bequem nicht recht?" (III, i). This statement shows that Theobald is indeed a bourgeois hero for he has established a principle to which he steadfastly sticks. He does not pretend to be other than what he feels he should be. Although he may be authoritarian and selfish, he has a clear conscience, and, in Sternheim's terms, he is therefore an ethical man. Scarron goes on to proclaim man's metaphysical essence, which puts him above woman, at which Mandelstam applauds but Theobald looks hesitant. Theobald's world is tangible and expressed in money, position, and material objects. The metaphysical flights of Scarron and Mandelstam are no more than a flight from reality to conceal their own gross inadequacies.

More important to Theobald is his voluntarily assumed insignificance which permits him to live his life to the full: "Meine Freiheit ist mir verloren, achtet die Welt auf mich in besonderer Weise. Meine Unscheinbarkeit ist die Tarnkappe, unter der ich meinen Neigungen, meiner innersten Natur frönen darf" (III, i). Outward conformity to bourgeois standards allows Theobald to fulfill his own desires without attracting attention. Theobald is the only character in the play who lives according to his "eigene Nuance." Theobald's acceptance of his social position affirms Sternheim's sole interest in the improvement of the quality of people's lives, rather than any desire for social change involving the realignment of classes.

When Luise goes to Mandelstam, who has also declared his love for her, she is left equally frustrated, as Mandelstam now feels his health is too delicate to allow such strenuous activities. While Luise is seeking consolation for her frustrations in church, in yet another act of self-deception, Theobald takes advantage of the occasion to seduce Deuter.

Theobald is aware of his own limitations, both social and intellectual, which, in no way, prevent him from fulfilling himself. He epitomises the Sternheim "hero" but he also epitomises his shortcomings. Theobald's impromptu seduction of Deuter may be viewed as self-fulfillment, but it may also be seen as an ill-considered act of self-indulgence, which is bound to harm his marriage. There is, as yet, no hint of Sternheim's "natural Socialism," which stresses concern for the other person, in Theobald's actions. The impression is created that Sternheim's social appendages to his concept of the "eigene Nuance" were written after the war in an attempt to combat charges of hedonism levelled at his "heroes."

Die Hose concludes with the promise of a child for Theobald and Luise due to the increase in income which the sub-letting of the rooms provides. The child is a son, Christian, who is the "hero" of Der Snob. This play deals with the consummation of Christian's ambitions to achieve acceptance in upper-bourgeois and aristocratic circles. Driving ambition serves to link him with his father who is

also prepared to use people, but Christian's desire to transcend the barriers of his background distinguishes him from Theobald.

The play begins with a new phase of Christian's life: he is about to become managing director of the company for which he works, and in which he has secretly acquired a large interest. The shrewd calculations which have ensured his path to success have made Christian mathematically exact in all his dealings. Therefore he feels no qualms about settling up his debts to those people who have helped him, in purely financial terms: "Ich trete in kein neues Viertel meines Lebens, ohne dass aus dem vergangenen die Schuld bezahlt ist" (I, i). He summarily dismisses his mistress, Sybil Hull, who is devoted to him and has taught him to be a gentleman, before buying off his parents. They too must conveniently disappear in order to avoid any embarrassing questions about his background. Now Christian is ready to continue the battle of life: "Der Kampf um die sichtbare Stelle im Leben ist gewaltig, der Menschen unzählige. Wo ich einen Fuss breit auslasse, drängt eine Legion den Schritt ein" (I, iv). The passive acceptance of the social situation together with a hedonistic sense of opportunism which characterises Theobald, has been replaced by relentless ambition for wealth and social status, and ruthlessness in his dealings with other people.

The focus of Christian's aims is on Graf Palen, one of

his directors, and his daughter Marianne. Graf Palen calls to interview Christian in order to establish whether Christian is a suitable candidate to be managing director of the firm, someone "der der ganzen Lebensauffassung nach zu uns gehört" (I, vi) as the Graf says. Christian avoids the complications of background by claiming to be an orphan. He goes on to describe his ambition as: ". . . zu sein wie jene, die äusserlich sichtbar in einem Adelsdiplom den Adel der Taten ihrer Ahnen tragen, an ihrer Seite, von ihnen als Helfer angenommen, die Grundsätze zur Geltung bringen zu dürfen, deren geschichtliche Vertreter sie sind" (I, vi).

The self-imposed anonymity which characterises the bourgeoisie and more particularly, Theobald, has been replaced by Christian with the idea of nobility. The symbolic wealth of an aristocratic title, which implies so much in so few words, represents the summit of Christian's ambition. Whereas Theobald was content to accept social conventions and enjoy himself freely under their protective cloak, Christian has lost the capacity to enjoy life--even his mistress was only a means to acquiring good manners---and has focused his entire attention on conventions.

Christian's concern for details--what Graf Palen calls "Sinn für die Nuance" (I, vi)--makes him the perfect outward aristocrat without, however, those qualities, "die ihr Wesen in der Zeit haben," (II, i) as Graf Palen observes. This leads Graf Palen to ask how one distinguishes bourgeois and

aristocrat: "Folgt wirklich dieser Bürgerliche seiner Natur, lebt er unser Leben, wodurch unterscheiden wir uns von ihm?" (II, i). Of course Christian is doing anything but following his "Natur." However, Graf Palen's daughter Marianne fails to see his artificiality, and because Christian is the perfect copy of the aristocrat--only an imitation could be so perfect--she falls head over heels in love with him. Graf Palen remains unconvinced but allows the dismal financial fortunes of his house to overcome his objections.

The nature of the bourgeoisie is discussed by Christian in a final conversation with Sybil, when he comes to the defense of his father whom Sybil attacks for his unscrupulousness in blackmailing Christian. Christian, assuming the point of view of an aristocrat, excuses it by pointing out the necessity of Theobald's selfishness in order to survive in his milieu: "Er soll's. Nichts anderes wünsche ich. Das ist das Dämonische an diesen Geschlechtern, deren Wurzeln noch auf dem Erdboden laufen, die Gesamtheit fühlt nicht einheitlich, atmet und bewegt sich nicht mit einem Ruck von einem Zentrum aus. Es passt der eine, wo der andre darbt" (II, vi). This reiteration of life as a battle--Christian uses the same term in I, iv--stands, once again, at variance with Sternheim's ideas on "natural Socialism." Self-fulfillment in Christian's case, as in Theobald's, does not also indicate a consideration of other people. Indeed, Christian quite blatantly "uses" them.

Theobald continues to see his son's ambitions through petty bourgeois eyes. Upon returning from his Zürich exile with the news of Luise's death, he learns of Christian's forthcoming marriage to a count's daughter. This provokes a characteristic comment from him: "Die Maus mit der Giraffe willst du verkuppeln, Seiltänzerstücke machen, ins Anormalische steigst du ja!" (II, viii). Theobald, who can only do what he does because no-one notices him, is quite against anything unusual. Christian seeks the extraordinary and his impeccable façade makes him unassailable.

Yet Christian soon makes one mistake. By chance, Graf Palen arrives and asks to be introduced. With great trepidation Christian does so, and then sees Theobald whisked off for a meal. Fearfully Christian looks out of the window, and when he sees Graf Palen giving precedence to Theobald, it induces a panic-stricken cry of: "Ich habe einen Fehler gemacht" (II, x). Christian fails to understand that Graf Palen, the natural aristocrat, recognises the natural bourgeois in Theobald, whereas the false aristocracy of Christian, which extends to his claiming to be the illegitimate son of a Viscount in the concluding scene of the play, only induces an ironic appreciation.

After the wedding, a slightly tipsy Theobald comes to say farewell to Christian. He takes the opportunity to congratulate Christian on overcoming his surroundings and aspiring to higher things: "Als Sieger bist du über meine

Meinungen und Prinzipien hinweggegangen. Ich lebte allzeit von Sprichwörtern . . . Du aber ganz einfach aus dir selbst . . ." (III, iii). Yet Theobald was equally selfish; he just lacked the imagination or the ambition to overcome his surroundings. The richness and naturalness which Theobald's life contains within its narrow limits must, in Sternheim's terms, be better than Christian's cultivated artificiality. Although Sternheim has Christian give Marianne a potted version of the idea of "Denkinhalte" and "Beziehungs-inhalte" (III, iv) to show that Christian is really his disciple, Sternheim fails to show that the idea of uniqueness stems from within the individual and is not something which is acquired from without. Christian does not even go as far as Krull in admitting that his actions are dictated by his desire for personal comfort. He seems completely absorbed in the task of acquiring a social veneer acceptable to the aristocracy as an end in itself.

Christian is, in fact, the antithesis of a Sternheim hero because he deliberately suppresses his "eigene Nuance" in order to live a life of deception. Indeed, the deception is such that Christian can claim to uphold a belief in the world of "Beziehungs-inhalte" whilst denying it in the very artificiality of his existence. His desire to emulate the aristocracy, instead of being himself, contradicts the notion of Christian being an example of the "brutale Nuance" fulfilling itself.

Whereas Der Snob sees Christian at the height of his powers, 1913 portrays his last battle before death: at the home of the von Maske's, where the family is gathering for a weekend party, events are proceeding towards a cataclysmic outcome. The products of Christian's union with Marianne are a disappointment to him. Christian's greatest affection is reserved for Ottolie, but she has inherited the romantic streak which lay in Luise and Marianne. Hard though Christian tries, he is unable to interest her in running the huge industrial empire he has amassed.

His foppish son, Philipp Ernst, cannot tolerate confusing business details; indeed, he cannot tolerate anything unpleasant: "Unannehmlichkeiten irgendwelcher Art, woher sie auch kommen, lehne ich aus Prinzip ab" (I, vi). His concern throughout the play is the acquisition of fine clothes, and the attention to detail on which Christian prided himself has become a ridiculous obsession in his son.

It is in the third child, Sofie, that all the aggressiveness and drive which went into Christian's make-up has found its quintessential expression, but she uses these qualities in order to try and displace her father. Already she has familiarised herself with every detail of "Christian Maske A. G." and can hardly wait for the death of Christian to assume control of the organisation. Her arrival in the house with her husband, Otto von Beeskow, preludes the final struggle:

Christian: Ich muss in der nächsten Zeit mein Austerlitz schlagen oder krepieren. (II, v)

The bitterness of the ensuing struggle is shown by Sofie's remark to the aristocratic Otto, when he discounts Christian's ability to thwart their intentions: "Wann wirst du endlich von diesem Blut Begriff haben? Mit Zähnen und Krallen sind wir bis zum letzten Atemzug in eine Sache verhängt, und unlöslich stehen oder fallen wir mit ihr" (II, vii). The reader is at once reminded of Christian's descriptions of life as a battle in Der Snob.

The tension is lessened by a comically decadent scene in which Phillip Ernst and his equally foppish friend, Prinz Oels, try on new clothes brought by Mister Eaton, a "gentleman's tailor" from England. The events are observed with amusement by Ottolie, whom Oels wishes to impress, and by Wilhelm Krey, Christian's secretary, who in disgust decides to leave that night and help the revolutionary cause after Ottolie descends to join them.

Krey is the most interesting character in the house. He is busy writing inflammatory speeches for a revolutionary socialist movement. So successful is his writing that Friedrich Stadler arrives from the group's headquarters to invite Krey to become their leader. Ottolie finds Krey an attractive figure because the confidence that he quietly conveys induces a response in her romantic nature, which is intensified when she discovers parts of his speeches in the

waste-paper bin. Although she is unable to raise any enthusiasm for the operation of Christian's enterprises, Ottolie's romantic nature is drawn to the idea of revolution. Ottolie later reveals her discovery of Krey's papers and tells him the effect that the plea for "wirkliche Werte anstelle des allgemeinen Produktionsschwindels" has had upon her (II, xv).

These words of Krey's are echoed by Christian in his final, violent conversation before his death. The evening begins with a romantic song-recital by Ottolie, which is followed by a general conversation. It is apparent that Christian is a changed man. The ruthlessness and ambition which characterised him in Der Snob have given way to a concern for other people and for the quality of their lives. He feels that Sofie's lack of a social conscience preludes the downfall of the Maske family and the society which they represent: "Ist eines Systems Höhe erreicht, steht die Möglichkeit eines Wechsels stets vor der Tür" (III, i).

Krey, who obviously feels this time for change is at hand, agrees with Christian and maintains that the evolving change will call forth individuals to bring it about. Sofie on the other hand claims the man moulds the event: "Umgekehrt. Ist erst der Mann da, folgt die Zeit" (III, i). The difference serves to underline Krey's socialist leanings and Sofie's belief in the "Kraftmensch."

The more important distinction between the dull uniformity which mass-production represents, and the emphasis on

individualism is brought out in Christian and Sofie's conversation. Christian is aware that Sofie has announced her conversion to Protestantism in order to win an arms contract from the Dutch government. Christian sees the ugly possibility of war ahead, and he has put all his final strength into thwarting Sofie, which would ruin the firm, in order to try and avoid catastrophe.

Christian suggests that the consumers of their products might strike in protest against always being treated as a unit instead of as an individual: Sofie asks why should they if the product is thereby cheaper. Christian replies:

Christian: Weil ihm [i.e. the consumer] der Dreck über denselben Leisten, den wir ihm aufhängen, endlich zum Hals heraushängt, weil er vielleicht wieder einmal Anständiges in der Hand haben will. Weil der massenweise Verschleiss aller Lebensutensilien ihn erzogen hat, auf das einzelne nicht mehr zu achten, und er Gefühle, Urteile und sich selbst hinwirft und verbraucht wie das übrige und ihnen keine Qualität mehr geben kann. Weil ihn das endlich in tiefster Seele ekelt. Oft habe ich euch gesagt, lasst neben dem rastlosen Nachdenken, wie man von dem gleichen Artikel in derselben Zeit das Doppelte und Vielfache herstellen kann, in allen Betrieben, Laboratorien darüber arbeiten, wie gleichzeitig Materie verbessert würde.
(III, ii)

Sofie replies with cold logicality: "Man kann nicht mit zwei Prinzipien arbeiten, die einander widersprechen. Wir dringen auf Simplizität, Massen, nicht Massgeschäft. Alles Besondere ist uns Greuel, da es aufhält" (III, ii). Sofie's total failure to appreciate what he is trying to say,

leads Christian to a final condemnation: "Nach uns Zusammenbruch! Wir sind reif" (III, ii).

It is evident that the Christian of Der Snob has become a changed man. The determination is obviously still there, but the concern with the outward nuance has been replaced by a concern for the individual. His attainment of noble status has led to a consideration of all men and of the quality of their lives. Yet there has never been any indication in either play of Christian's concern with his own life and its qualities. Theobald obviously enjoyed life, but Christian seems to have spent his whole time thinking about life. The only emotion he has conveyed is his disgust at the outcome of his own efforts which result in a last attempt to right matters by defeating Sofie.

When Sofie expresses her surprise at Christian's sentiments, he explains: ". . . Ich mache Bilanz und fühle, von menschlichen Empfindungen mehr als von eigenen besessen . . ." (III, ii). True as this may be, one wonders if Christian was ever emotionally (rather than intellectually) involved with himself. It is unlikely that this most intellectual of creations ever was. Even his parting shot at Sofie is a sophisticated, carefully conceived action: Christian becomes a Catholic convert and nullifies the arms deal.

Overwrought with excitement, Christian collapses and dies. The guests gather together in horror. Krey is now trapped in the room wearing the elegant clothes which he had

picked up from Mister Eaton's case in a paroxysm of envy and disgust just beforehand. Ottilie, in a state of distress, falls into Krey's arms, in which position Friedrich Stadler sees the pair of them. Drawing the natural conclusions, he runs out into the night to seek a new age:

Der Diener: Es ist schwarz. Ein Licht?

Friedrich: Muss sich finden! Gebe Gott - Leuchte zum grossen Ziel. (III, vii)

The picture of Christian as a benign industrialist, whose main concern is for a return to the emphasis on quality instead of quantity, contrasts strikingly with the ruthless egoist of Der Snob. The sympathetic manner in which Sternheim portrays Christian in 1913 leads one to conclude that the latter play contains the "real" Christian fulfilling his "eigene Nuance." There is no motivation offered for Christian's change, which indicates that the reason lies largely in Sternheim's growing interest in socialism. Although the figure of Stadler, which is little more than an affectionate portrait of Sternheim's friend Ernst Stadler, can be discounted, Wilhelm Krey epitomises the idealistic young Socialist for whom Sternheim obviously had considerable sympathy.

The defeat of Sofie, and the idealistic concluding lines, emphasise the positive idealism of the play in contrast to the ironic and very negative conclusion of Der Snob.

Das Fossil is very much an after-thought. It does not represent an extension of any ideas involved in the first

three plays of the series, but provides a mordantly ironic variation on a basic theme, which reflects Sternheim's increased disillusionment with politics.

The play is set in the castle of General der Kavallerie a. D. Traugott von Beeskow, who lives in splendid ignorance of the present, remembering only the glories of the past. His home is a mausoleum in which he is a voluntary fossil. The ignominious events of Versailles, which left him speechless for three years, have caused him to suspend the world. However, the situation alters when news arrives of the visit of Ago von Bohna, a close relative, following his release from a Russian prisoner-of-war camp.

Ago is first met by Otto, Traugott's son, and Sofie, née von Maske. They explain that Traugott barely tolerates them because they are both bourgeois:

Otto: Weil ich auf Sensation des Augenblicks und Entwicklungen reagiere, nicht meiner Heirat wegen, bin ich für ihn Bürger.

Sofie: Für ihn bist Du A oder B mit der Voraussetzung, A und B bedeuten ein Starres, mit dem er zu Zwecken in Ewigkeit rechnet.

Otto: Nicht kalkuliert. Kalkül ist bourgeois.
(I, iii)

The contrast between motion and stillness represents the historic approach of the world of "Beziehungs inhalte" and the scientific approach of the world of "Denkinhalte." Ago reveals that he is a convert to communism. Although this would normally imply adherence to the scientific approach

because of the acceptance of Marxist dogma, Ago claims otherwise in the course of the play. Ago next encounters Ursula, his former sweetheart, who works in Otto's laboratory. She studies syntheses, which is again an example of the scientific approach.¹ The paradox of Otto's belonging to both worlds is not touched upon: he admits to his reaction to events, which links him with the world of "Beziehungs inhalte," although his work in creating syntheses implies that he is bound to the scientific approach associated with the world of "Denkinhalte."

Ago talks to Ursula and explains that he has rejected the past and is now: ". . . nur mit dem geschmückt, was hier und jetzt wichtig ist" (I, v).

The opposition between Ursula, the traditionalist, and Ago, the revolutionary, is well demonstrated when Traugott asks Ago to define what sort of a new man he is:

Ursula: Die ohne Beharrungs- mit Anpassungssinn.

Ago: Ungefähr, doch anders.

Ursula: Wenig gewurzelt.

Ago: Wenig belastet.

Ursula: Weniger verantwortlich.

Ago: Unabhängig. (I, vi)

The burden of uniqueness which was Ago's aristocratic inheritance has been exchanged for the liberating anonymity of identity with a collective fate. Whether Sternheim realised it or not, this argument is flawed. Ago is only independent if he can voluntarily submit himself to a collective

¹See footnote 1, page 43.

fate, but, as he is a communist, this commitment is an inevitable one to an inevitable fate.

Regardless of the flaw, Traugott considers it important for Ago to be won back to beliefs in the aristocracy and he calls upon Ursula to use her feminine influence. In her first attempt to win Ago over, Ursula begins by emphasising the ties of family, race, and ancestry. Ago counters this by showing the right of dissent has an equally long history: "Was ich tat, tat Kopernikus! . . ." (II, iv). He produces his communist dogmas and affirms his faith in class-consciousness. Ursula resorts to feminine wiles. She confesses her love for him, and asks him if she does not represent something special which his philosophy would only destroy: "Ursel für Dich und mich allein. Und zerschlägst Du meine Einzigkeit, machst Du Dir die unter allen Auserwählte unkenntlich" (II, iv). Ursula's body places a great strain on Ago's philosophy but he resists temptation, and promises to read some of his new book to her that night before he leaves.

When Ago begins to read from his book that night, it is not communism but Sternheim's rejection of generally valid moral laws preached by "one's betters" which is propounded: ". . . Nur Wirklichkeit, die unvergleichliche, besteht, in der alle Kreatur ihr Recht nimmt, aus keiner voreingenommenen Norm, keinen Befehl der Besserwissenden doch aus sich selbst zu gelten und, als Ding an sich verantwortlich sein" (III, iv).

Ago is not preaching pure Marxism but he is attacking "masslose Selbstsucht" which must be tempered by a concern for other people. This is Sternheim's "natural socialism." When Ago confesses his desire for the possession of Ursula, she seizes the opportunity to undermine his principles. Ursula rejects him because possession is a bourgeois trait and she would hate to cause Ago to adopt it. Ago objects that such an argument is unnatural: ". . . Vorzüge der Natur sollen gelten" (III, iv). Ursula scornfully replies that, unlike an aristocrat, Ago does not defend in practice what he advocates in theory: "Es entsetzt euch nur theoretisch. Praktisch, Du beweist's, will auch der Rebell Erlesenes. Wir aber verurteilen euch darum nicht, fordern nur Vollkommenheit der Führer, wie wir sie besassen: Euer ganzes Verantwortungs- und Ehrgefühl" (III, iv).

When Ago asks how a woman in love can talk of honour, Ursula counters: ". . . Seit wann der Sozialist auf Befriedigung persönlicher Leidenschaft?" (III, iv). Her victory is assured when Ago replies: "Seitdem die Frau so schön wie Du geschaffen wurde" (III, iv).

Ursula seizes his book and beating down Ago's gaze with a look of triumphant sensuality throws it onto the fire. Ago, ablaze with desire, throws her onto the nearby bed. As their cries of ecstasy shatter the stillness of the night, Traugott appears, his gigantic shadow falling menacingly across the stage. With a deep growl of "Canaillen!" he shoots them dead.

Ursula has betrayed her aristocratic inheritance by submitting to Ago, who has not only betrayed his aristocratic allegiances but even his new-found socialist ones. If nothing else, Traugott can maintain the purity of his ossified stock by pruning the weak growths.

This argument is only a rationalisation of an obscure ending. In the light of Sternheim's writings, the shooting symbolises the end of his hopes. Emrich's analysis of Das Fossil¹ concludes that Traugott is the hero of the play because he adheres to a tradition, even if it is an ossified one, whilst Ago and Ursula are representative of bourgeois ephemerality. Ago and Ursula are not reacting to maintain a façade or to extract any advantage from the situation. They are satisfying a desire, perhaps even expressing love, which is surely a fulfillment of the self, adherence to the idea of the "eigene Nuance." This conclusion is supported by Ago's writings, which directly convey Sternheim's personal beliefs about "natural Socialism." Therefore the death of Ago and Ursula can be equated with the end of Sternheim's hopes. Sternheim had advocated a revolutionary change in people's outlook on life for so long, that when the revolutionary events after the conclusion of hostilities resulted in a reinstatement of conservative forces representative of an equally reactionary philosophy of life, he despaired of his

¹ Wilhelm Emrich, "Carl Sternheims 'Kampf der Metapher!' und die 'eigene Nuance,'" Geist und Widergeist (Frankfurt a. M., 1965), pp.163-184.

aims ever being achieved, and Das Fossil expresses that despair.

The four plays about the Maske family, show Sternheim's initial concern with self-fulfillment in Die Hose and Der Snob which is then tempered with social consideration in 1913, the most optimistic of the plays, and ultimately destroyed by the forces of reaction in Das Fossil.

c) Two plays of the war years: Der Kandidat¹ and Tabula Rasa²

The two plays in this section, although minor works, nevertheless convey Sternheim's ideas with great clarity. Der Kandidat is an adaption by Sternheim of a play by Flaubert entitled Le Candidat. The original story has been maintained, but Sternheim has changed the emphases in order to make his point clearer. The story details how a bourgeois, who grows tired of country life, seeks something to occupy his time, and decides to run for parliament. The dubious world of politics gives Sternheim the ideal opportunity to show his bourgeois "hero" Russek changing his mind and his allegiances with startling rapidity in an all out effort to gain victory. Russek's political fortunes are inextricably bound with the future of his daughter, Luise, and also of Russek's wife.

¹GW, II, 5-86.

²GW, II, 161-248.

Initially Russek agrees to be the candidate for the Conservative party, but the candidature is lost when Russek refuses the hand of his daughter to Graf Rheydt's son. Russek had previously been warned of the Rheydt's poverty by Luise's sweetheart, the scheming Grübel. Grübel then arranges for Russek to become the candidate of the National Liberals. However, when Grübel too is refused Luise's hand because of his poverty, he determines to gain revenge by arranging for Alfons Seidenschnur--the photographer in Die Kassette--to stand as another candidate for the "Left." Grübel then informs a worried Russek that he can thwart Seidenschnur's candidature, and Russek immediately revalues Grübel's financial probabilities. Meanwhile Graf Rheydt stands down as the new Conservative candidate and comes to offer Russek his help in another indirect attempt to win Luise for his son. Unfortunately, Grübel arrives at that point with some National Liberals, and the encounter of the two sides at Russek's house leads them both to reject him.

Russek's fortunes are at their lowest when he undergoes a disasterous public questioning to determine his suitability as a candidate (III, ii). However, he is saved by the all-powerful journalist, Bach, who offers to write a brilliant and dishonest summary. Bach has little interest in Russek but has fallen in love with Russek's wife.

Events reach their climax as Russek awaits the final outcome of the ballot. In order to secure votes, he promises

to do everything for everybody. His selfishness knows no bounds: when Graf Rheydt offers a solid block of voters in return for Luise's hand for his son, Russek asks Luise, but leaves her in little doubt of his wishes:

Luise: Du marterst mich, Vater.

Russek: Ich befehle ja nichts. Ich flehe dich nur an!

Luise: Ich kann nicht.

Russek: Luise - um Gottes willen!

Auf die Knieen vor ihr

Rette mich, Luise, rette mich! (IV, vii)

Luise relents, but she has already promised to elope with Grübel.

Russek hysterically awaits the outcome. He has done everything he can think of to gain votes. In desperation he appeals to God for advice:

Das ist dies jämmerliche Erdenleben, das man ertragen muss. Die Weisen unterrichten einen, die Priester nicht, wie man zu seinem Vorteil schiebt Soll ich frech oder fromm sein, um bedeutend zu scheinen und an die Spitze zu gelangen? Ich war stets zu beidem bereit, doch in diesem Augenblick will ich mich mit jedem geforderten Opfer zu dem System bekennen, das Erfolg verbürgt. Mit jedem Opfer! Hört mich einer? Menschen, Götter, hört mich an! (IV, x)

God answers his plea and Russek is elected.

The completely superficial quality of Russek, and all the other characters, leads one to conclude that he is both Sternheimian "hero" and "anti-hero." His concern for himself at the expense of all others indicates an egotistic ruthlessness of a Christian Maske (in Der Snob at least), but the

complete lack of any central core denies him the possibility of an "eigene Nuance." Sternheim's exhortation to have no preconceptions in approaching a situation has been carried to such extremes in Russek that he has lost sight of his own personality. Russek could never fulfill himself because he only exists as a reaction to other people's ideas.

If Russek is a negative example of the Sternheimian "hero," Wilhelm Ständer, the hero of Tabula Rasa, is a very positive one.

Ständer is supposedly an honest worker in a glass factory, but the stage directions provide an initial ironic contrast: "Die Szene ist dauernd die bürgerliche Wohnstube Ständers." The bourgeois impression is furthered in the opening scene: Ständer has a mistress cum maid, Bertha, whom he refuses to recognise as his servant to avoid wage increases; he eats gourmet meals behind closed shutters served by his ward, Isolde, whom he encourages to read Schiller—"Erprob^t ist er" (I, i).

The impression of a thoroughly bourgeois existence stands at odds with Ständer's conversation with the professional communist agitator, Sturm. Ständer has called him in to press for a new, million Mark library at the works, which he considers the workers' due. However, Ständer's real motives become apparent when he talks with his colleague, Heinrich Flocke. The approaching centenary of the glass firm will entail publication of detailed statistics revealing

holdings which Ständer and Flocke have secretly acquired.

Sturm's activities should serve to prevent this discovery, which would make it impossible for them to continue in their comfortable positions at the factory.

However, Sturm seeks not just a new library but revolution, which would destroy the value of Ständer's and Flocke's shares. To combat this possibility, Ständer enlists the aid of Artur Flocke, Heinrich's son and also Isolde's fiancé, who is a Social Democrat seeking, in contrast to Sturm, "peaceful revolution:"

Artur: Aber nicht auf gewaltsamem, sondern dem friedlichen Weg der Entwicklung. An die Stelle des "bevorrechteten" tritt der gleichberechtigte Bürger. Die Sozialdemokratie löst die bisherige Gesellschaft nicht auf und proletarisiert ihre Mitglieder, sondern hebt den Arbeiter aus der Stellung des Proletariers in die des Bürgers und verallgemeinert Bürgertum. (I, v)

Artur's wish for an all-bourgeois society is the antithesis of Sternheim's intentions, but Ständer, Sternheim's hero, wishes to play off Artur against Sturm purely for his own benefit. This involves maintaining a very delicate balance, and the subtleties of Ständer's actions eventually so confuse the simple Flocke that he asks what Ständer's real motives are. For a second Ständer's mask slips, but he quickly recovers:

Innerlich? G a n z innerlich? Um mir irgendwie die Mittel zu wirklichem Leben-
Er geht dabei mit einem Ruck auf Flocke los, macht

aber vor ihm halt und sagt im gewöhnlichen Ton: Ach Gott, du weisst es doch. Das Wohl der Proletarier, Fortbildung und so weiter. (II, vii)

Ständer's machinations are ended with the arrival of one of the directors, Paul Schippel, to offer him a directorship. Schippel's speech reveals how completely he has accepted the bourgeois ideals for which he strived so hard (in Bürger Schippel). The offer of the directorship, he says, is to be interpreted as the first step on the path towards an end of class differences and the formation of one large bourgeoisie. Ständer declines the offer and successfully proposes Flocke in his stead. This is not a magnanimous gesture on Ständer's part, but rather an avoidance of the responsibilities which the job entails. As always, Ständer thinks first and foremost of himself.

Flocke is overwhelmed by the job, and within a matter of weeks he is on his death-bed. Ständer realises that he has acquired enough money to retire from work and set about the task of self-fulfillment (III, ii). He passes a medical examination with flying colours and looks forward to a long life when the doctor gives him a prescription for healthiness which matches his own entirely: "Vor allem aber fege Selbstgefühl, das Bewusstsein der Freiheit und eigenen Willens durch die Blutbahnen" (III, iii).

The next stage is for Ständer to enjoy his meal with the curtains open and Isolde posing as Abundantia. Ständer

takes the opportunity of Artur's arrival to berate the self-satisfied couple, who consider themselves to be enlightened progressive individuals. His (and Sternheim's) wrath is directed in particular against Artur: "In deiner Person verkörpert sich für mich der zähe Schleim der tausend Gemeinplätze und Redensarten, mit dem der nach Eigentümlichkeit durstende europäische Mensch betropft und zu einer klebrigen Masse geknebelt wird" (III, v).

Ständer's final discussion is with Sturm, whom he accuses of failing to see that the revolution must be in people's thinking and not in the control of society's wealth:

Wie kannst du die Männer vom Weg ihrer historisch beglaubigten Tugenden, Weiber aus den Schlupfwinkeln der ihnen zugewiesenen Vortrefflichkeiten locken? Wer spült die Milch im Frauenleib rein von den Giftkeimen des nicht Sein-, sondern Scheinenwollens, die, dem Säugling eingeflösst, ihn später zwingt, eine bürgerliche Geltung zu behaupten, der keine menschliche Bedeutung entspricht? (III, vi)

Ständer is unable to offer a solution for society, even though he has found one for himself: "Unabhängigkeit von Zunft und Gemeinschaftsidealen, will ich nur noch mein eigenes Herz durchfrischen, die Lehrer suchen, die *m e i n e* Natur verlangt, und sollte ich sie in China und in der Südsee finden" (III, vi).

The quality which distinguishes the Sternheimian "hero" most readily is self-awareness. The selfishness and egocentricity which so many characters possess, e.g. Christian

Maske, Russek, Krull, represents only partial fulfillment if it is not coupled with an awareness of the clichéd attitudes one must adopt in order to exist comfortably in society whilst fulfilling one's "Nuance." The final actions of Ständer represent an advance and a retreat by Sternheim in his views: Ständer's confrontation with those around him and his decision to devote the rest of his life to self-fulfillment represents a more extreme position than that of characters like Theobald Maske, who always remain within society, even if they use it to cloak their activities. Yet Ständer's failure to find a general prescription for society, and his indications that his own solution may lie in a flight from reality to exotic places, suggests that Sternheim was beginning to doubt whether his radical ideas could attain general acceptance in an inherantly conservative society.

d) An idyllic interlude: Perleberg¹

Perleberg shows that Sternheim was never able to suppress the romantic streak latent within him. The story tells how Fritz Frisecke and his wife Auguste set up in business as hoteliers in the secluded village of Perleberg. The hotel, which Auguste's brother, Adolf, sold Fritz after filling him with drink, would seem to be a poor business propo-

¹GW, II, 365-456. It appears under the title Der Ständer. See page 16, footnote 2.

sition, but an enticing newspaper advertisement has brought them their first customer, Tack.

Fritz and Adolf are continually at logger-heads, but serenity is restored through the example of Tack. Tack is a poor Berlin school-teacher with a chronic lung infection. Just to be able to breathe country air and enjoy the sunshine are pleasures of inestimable value to him. His love of life and his natural kindness towards people begin to have a positive effect on the rancorous inhabitants of the hotel. Adolf is convinced of the advantage of happy co-existence when Tack explains to him the reason for his son's apparent slowness at school: "Es packt ihm das Einzelne zu stark. Alles ist ihm ein Wunder . . ." (II, ix). In other words, Adolf's son fully appreciates the world of "Beziehungs inhalte" and, in accordance with Sternheim's reasoning, this appreciation of things makes a person happy, because he is then able to appreciate people and live more tolerantly: " [such people are] Die Besten vielleicht, bestimmt die Glücklichsten mit ihrer Gewissheit einer besseren Welt hinter der zufällig sichtbaren, und Hass, Neid und Streit, unsere niedrigen Sorgen bleiben ihnen fern" (II, ix).

Adolf recognises the validity and sanity of this approach to life, and begins to adopt an openly friendly attitude in his dealings with the Frisecke family.

Tack's perfectly natural personality has effected Frisecke's young niece, Lene, who declares her love for him.

Tack also has fallen in love with Lene, in whom he recognises the naturalness and naiveté which he so prizes. The local children too have taken Tack to their hearts, and he describes with Werther-like enthusiasm to Lene, how he would love to show them the beauties of Nature: "Hier mit ihnen durch Felder gehen, ihnen, wie herrlich die Welt, der Schöpfer in jedem Halm ist, zeigen dürfen, wie fruchtbar Sonne in jedem Strahl . . ." (II, x).

Frisecke is the last to appreciate Tack's charms: having had his suspicions aroused when Tack announces he will be first customer in Adolf's new health-spring, Frisecke concludes that Tack is out to ruin him when he asks for Lene's hand. Before Frisecke is able to realise his error, Tack dies, but he leaves behind a harmonious and contented community.

It is difficult to reconcile that almost saintly figure of Tack with the other "heroes" that Sternheim created. It is nevertheless apparent that Tack is so natural a person that he cannot help being true to his "eigene Nuance." The point is brought home in the closing scene of the play, when Auguste asks Frisecke if he now enjoys his newly found peace and quiet:

Auguste: Siehst du! Endlich Ruhe und Frieden.
 Frisecke nach einer Pause, langsam: Doch sollte ich sagen, dass mir alles so besser gefiele - müsste ich lügen.

Auguste empört: Du bist doch aber - !

Frisecke sehr ruhig: Ich bin so.

Ideal as it would be if everyone were as saintly as Tack, it is wrong to try and emulate him if this is contrary to your nature. Adolf changes because his aggressiveness was a façade, but for Frisecke the lesson he learns is that he is what he is, and he must not try to be anything different. Despite the apparent differences between Perleberg and the other plays of the cycle, it is evident that the main point is once again fulfillment of the "eigene Nuance."

e) Two late plays: Der entfesselte Zeitgenosse¹ and Der Nebbich²

The two plays in this concluding section are conceived in a lighter comic vein than any of the preceding works. At the same time they convey Sternheim's ideas with a great deal of force and in more obvious manner. Basic tenets of Sternheim's beliefs are found repeatedly in the texts, implying that Sternheim was increasing the didacticism in his works to overcome the ambiguity which had continually dogged his attempts at reform.

In the case of Der entfesselte Zeitgenosse, Sternheim's

¹GW, III, 5-82.

²GW, III, 83-262.

efforts bore little fruit as the play has never been produced since its dismal première at the "Hessisches Landestheater," Darmstadt, in 1912. The play revolves around the efforts of various suitors to win the hand of the wealthy Klara Cassati. At the age of twenty-nine, she has realised that her inherited business empire cannot be controlled by her alone, and Klara has systematically begun a selection process to find the most suitable husband. The final five are gathered together to await Klara's decision, and have just been joined by another person, Klette, who has been invited to stay after discovering Klara's diary and returning it to her. The diary, which contains all Klara's secrets, has been returned unopened which arouses the suspicions of the applicants. They all live according to the spirit of reason which rules the age, and such unreasonable behaviour is inexplicable to them.

Klara herself is troubled by an unaccountable urge to be charitable towards others in blatant contradiction of the rule of reason, and is desperately seeking advice from a specialist to try and effect a cure.

When Klette is challenged to explain his strange actions, he replies that he is a "Zeitkind," which, he later explains, is to be distinguished from a "Zeitgenosse:" "Nicht Zeit g e n o s s e, Zeit k i n d sagte ich zweimal, weil dem Kind mögliche Zukunft, nicht ausgemachte Gegenwart gehört" (II, v). He explains his philosophy of life in succinct terms to Klara:

Klette: Ich warte, bleibe bereit.

Klara: Für welche Notwendigkeit?

Klette langsam und fest, indem er sie mit Blicken misst: Für alles Mögliche. (II, vi)

It is Klara's companion, Gräfin Ursula Wrocho, who realises that Klara and Klette have adopted extreme positions --Klara in her approval of reason and Klette in his utter rejection of it--and that they could both help each other: "Zu so viel entfesseltem Schicksalswillen wünsche ich ihm Klette dem Unentrinnbaren gegenüber ein Teil Demut, wie ich unserer Patientin Klara eine Dosis seiner Visionslust in blinden Unterwerfungstrieb herabfliehe. Beide vereint erst könnten vollkommen funktionieren" (II, vii).

Klette's feelings are revealed when, having already stolen a picture of Klara, he instinctively dives into the sea to save her, although he cannot swim. The failure of the applicants to try and rescue Klara, obliges them to leave, even though they all justify their failure through reason. Klara is made aware of the nature of her feelings by the Gräfin, who, because she lives naturally and not reasonably, is able to recognise love.

However, when Klette comes to take his leave of Klara, he denies any feelings other than scorn for her way of life, and no more. His future lies in self-fulfillment in another part of the world, away from the stultifying predictability of decaying European culture.

Before he is finally able to leave, Gräfin Wrocho

gives him a lecture on sharing his emotions with others-- "Auch im Empfinden sind wir Mitmenschen" (III, vi) she says at one point--but Klette will not accept that feelings are worth sharing with such a predictable person: "Aber sie ist Klischée heutiger Gültigkeiten, die ich kenne!" (III, vii). It requires the efforts of the Kammerdiener, Mayer, who explains that there is much more to Klara if she can hold his and the Gräfin's interest and arouse feelings towards her in Klette. Klette finally objects that Klara must surely have lost her virginity, but Mayer says if he has the faith to believe otherwise: ". . . könnte es nicht das allenfallsige Wunder sein . . ." (III, vii). Klette is convinced and eagerly goes up to join Klara in her room.

The plot in Der entfesselte Zeitgenosse is more fantastic than most of Sternheim's and the conclusion is highly contrived, but it is in essence no different from those other plays in which Sternheim's "hero" achieves sexual fulfillment as a partial expression of self-fulfillment e.g. Grübel (Der Kandidat), Theobald (Die Hose), Christian (Der Snob). The difference lies in the more explicitly didactic nature of the presentation: the five suitors are completely governed by the rule of reason and do everything according to plan, whilst Klette is an extreme case of self-fulfillment who acts quite impulsively. The two sides are linked by Klara, who in one flash of insight, rejects complete adherence to reason in order to discover her real self through the natural emotion

of love.

In the final play to be discussed, Der Nebbich (although chronologically Das Fossil ends the cycle), Sternheim makes his point in a highly sophisticated manner.

Instead of portraying a "hero" who obviously lives according to Sternheimian principles, like Klette, Sternheim creates a bourgeois in Der Nebbich, who is so perfectly bourgeois that he expresses exactly his "eigene Nuance." Fritz Tritz is a travelling-salesman whose ambition in life is to be a postal clerk in Garmisch-Partenkirchen so that he can dictate the speed at which business may be conducted. As he expresses it himself: "Statt Verkehr pflege Einkehr" (I, i).

He is sitting enjoying a beer with his friends Meyer and Marlowski when Rita Marchetti, concert-singer, and her entourage arrive to pass the time while their car is being repaired. Rita falls immediately in love with Fritz and arranges for him to visit her. Within a short time they are lovers, but the basis of their relationship denies them the possibility of any permanent happiness.

Rita's attraction to Fritz was based on the recognition of how completely he is himself. For Rita this is a unique quality which she appreciates, but she fails to realise that once Fritz is uprooted from his bourgeois setting, he loses his "eigene Nuance." Rita determines to make Fritz a success in every possible sphere. In politics Fritz is taught to represent democratic ideals "weil du als mittlerer

Ausdruck der Zeit nichts anderes sein kannst" (I, v). In journalism Fritz is taught to specify nothing: ". . . in keinem Wort sein Spezielles, das, was ein Ding deutlich und ein für allemal ausdrückt, sondern das Allgemeine, das es mit vielem teilt, zu betonen . . ." (II, ii).

Fritz absorbs all the information, but this new emphasis on generalities, which all Rita's acquaintances consider to be a revelation of Fritz's genius, is continually distancing Fritz from his real self. It is expressed physically by the continuing deterioration in Fritz's health to the point of collapse and of sexual impotence.

Seeking aid, Fritz returns to his old friend Marlowski. Here he finds the natural qualities which he has lost expressed in the pungent aroma of an onion. He is enraptured by this symbol of the natural life from which he has been lured. At the same time, Rita is revealing her onion-complex to her doctor, which shows her morbid fear of natural things. When she is shown a photograph of Tritz taken at the café on their first meeting, Rita cannot believe that it is genuine. However, when Tritz returns to the flat in the clothes he wore on that first meeting and reeking of onions, Rita is forced to recognise that she has created an illusion. Gratefully Fritz sees her recognise him for what he is: a "Nebbich" who represents everything in his own milieu and nothing out of it. Happily they part, and Fritz is able to return to his true self.

Despite the sophisticated element of self-parody in Der Nebbich, the play is, in essence, no different from the very first play of the cycle, Die Hose. Fritz Tritz' complete identification with his bourgeois rôle, and his complete disorientation in a different social setting, recall Theobald Maske, who wished no more than to enjoy life as much as he manifestly did within the confines of his petty-bourgeois environment.

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

What emerges most clearly from an examination of all the plays forming the cycle is Sternheim's constant illustration of the idea of the "eigene Nuance." This is the common thread which links all the plays. The change in Sternheim's thought is consequently reflected in the change of his own attitude towards the concept of the "eigene Nuance" as revealed in the plays.

Sternheim's sympathy with the selfish petty-bourgeois Theobald Maske in the first play of the cycle (Die Hose) already indicates that Sternheim's "heroes" are not cast in a conventional mould but are intended to shock their audience. The two subsequent plays, Die Kassette and Bürger Schippel concentrate on showing the futility of bourgeois society rather than the value of living to fulfill one's "Nuance," although Fanny, Thekla, and the Fürst serve to illustrate the point. Der Snob provides an excellent example of the "brutale Nuance" in Christian, but his victory is partially nullified by the falsity of his existence. In a similar manner, Russek's victory in Der Kandidat is as hollow as his personality. His wife and daughter are won by the two men, Grübel and Bach, who really have a "Nuance" to fulfill. The sequel to Der Snob, 1913, is Sternheim's most radical departure from the general scheme of his other plays in the cycle. Not only is Christian made to change his opinions and recognise the

validity of the world of "Beziehungs inhalte," but Sofie, who is temperamentally the same as the Christian of Der Snob, suffers a defeat. The figures of Krey and Stadler underline the very strong social emphasis of this play.

Although the concept of the "eigene Nuance" finds clear expression in the figure of Ständer, there are already signs of Sternheim's pessimism at the hope of a general acceptance by society of his ideas in Tabula Rasa.

Perleberg is an openly romantic reiteration of Sternheim's beliefs. In Der entfesselte Zeitgenosse, the message is told in a form which borders on parody. The elaborate joke of the pure bourgeois representing exactly his "eigene Nuance" in Der Nebbich is self-parody, and the triumph of Traugott von Beeskow in Das Fossil, together with the death of Ago and Ursula, is Sternheim's admission of his failure to initiate any change in people's outlook on life.

Those critics who dismiss Sternheim as a pure cynic e.g. Bernhard Diebold,¹ Carol Petersen,² fail to see the play-cycle in its entire perspective, for they seize on "heroes" like Schippel and Christian Maske and ignore those like Tack and Klette. This betrays a failure to understand

¹ Bernhard Diebold, "Sternheim der Grandseigneur," Anarchie im Drama (Frankfurt a. M., 1921), pp. 75-132.

² Carol Petersen, "Carl Sternheim," Expressionismus, Gestalten einer literarischen Bewegung, eds. H. Friedmann & O. Mann (Heidelberg, 1956), pp. 280-295.

the concept of the "eigene Nuance" to the extent that Sternheim's refusal to introduce generally valid moral laws, his amorality, is mistaken for immorality, but immorality in Sternheim's eyes, is to be found in the self-deceptive actions of people like Wolke, Scarron, and Artur Flocke.

On the other hand, critics who claim that Sternheim's intention is to show the "Wesenlosigkeit" of his times e.g.

Julius Bab,¹ Kuno Brombacher,² do not go far enough. Sternheim not only recognises and illustrates this, in figures like Schippel and Russek, but he continually demonstrates how to overcome the problem by expressing one's "eigene Nuance."

The critics who discuss the idea of the "eigene Nuance" have all approached a full critical appreciation of Sternheim's plays without, however, examining all the works in sufficient detail. Critics such as Elise Dosenheimer³ and Albert Soergel⁴ concentrate on the early plays (i.e. up to 1913) and conclude that Sternheim was being too flippantly ambiguous to be taken seriously. More recent critics, e.g.

¹ Julius Bab, Die Chronik des deutschen Dramas, 5 vols. (Berlin, 1921-1926). See, particularly, IV, 27-35.

² Kuno Brombacher, Der deutsche Bürger im Literaturspiegel von Lessing bis Sternheim (München, 1920), pp.84-97.

³ Elise Dosenheimer, Das deutsche soziale Drama von Lessing bis Sternheim (Konstanz, 1949), pp.281-319.

⁴ Albert Soergel, Dichtung und Dichter der Zeit, Vol.II: Im Banne des Expressionismus (Leipzig, 1925), pp.644-661.

Wolfgang Wendler,¹ and Wilhelm Emrich,² tend to devote their attention to the later plays, which leads them to oversimplify the case for Sternheim as a didactic writer.

Despite his initial intentions to merely show contemporary society as it was and to leave it to cure its own ills, Sternheim was unable to resist the temptation to didacticism when his plays were misunderstood, largely because of his overestimation of the public's ability to understand his "heroes." In particular those figures whose "Nuancen" are immoral by standards other than Sternheim's, provoked a great deal of anger among Sternheim's contemporaries, because they failed to comprehend that Sternheim considered self-deception a more heinous crime than adultery (Die Hose, Der Kandidat) or blatant opportunism (Der Snob).

This led to two reactions in Sternheim's subsequent plays: he recognised his own failure in trying to show society's falseness, and in consequence he wrote plays which made the message much more distinct e.g. Perleberg, Der entfesselte Zeitgenosse. At the same time, Sternheim lost heart in any hopes of a general change in society, and allowed

¹ Wolfgang Wendler, "Wirklichkeit und Wunder im Werk Carl Sternheims," Grüsse. Hans Wolffheim zum sechzigsten Geburtstag (Festschrift), ed. Klaus Schröter (Frankfurt a. M., 1965), pp.113-132.

² Wilhelm Emrich, "Carl Sternheims 'Kampf der Metapher' und für die 'eigene Nuance,'" Geist und Widergeist (Frankfurt a. M., 1965), pp.163-184.

self-parody (Der Nebbich) and negativism (Das Fossil) to enter his works.

Hence, a survey of the complete cycle reveals that Sternheim changed his opinions. His basic belief in the "eigene Nuance" is evident in all the plays, but critical and public reaction to Sternheim's plays, combined with the depressing failure of German society to renovate itself after 1918, caused Sternheim to modify his presentation of the idea of self-fulfillment.

The most difficult question to resolve is what was Sternheim's own attitude towards contemporary society? There is, of course, no doubt that Sternheim found bourgeois Germany quite odious, but was his attack on it the result of sympathy or of scorn?

The accusation of scorn has arisen largely from the feeling that Sternheim's "heroes" are bent on self-fulfillment at the expense of society, rather than for the good of society. Sternheim's denial of having any destructive intentions was never very impressive. Characters like Christian Maske do seem to be pure egoists, but Sternheim made some attempt at a defence: Klette's decision to join Klara in Der entfesselte Zeitgenosse affirms the message of people's interdependence most clearly. Christian's change of heart in 1913, and the character of Tack in Perleberg, also show Sternheim's portrayal of social obligations among his characters. Nevertheless, there are so

many examples of "heroes" who are quite prepared to exploit all and sundry, that these few adherents of "natural socialism" represent little more than an attempt to paper over the cracks in Sternheim's arguments.

Perhaps the most telling point in favour of Sternheim's positive intentions is indicated by his own reactions to the critical receptions of his plays. His very emotional indignation and anger suggest that Sternheim was very involved in his creations, and that he wished to have them understood as he intended. The picture of Sternheim as a cold intellectual ironically observing society from the safety of his castle does an injustice to Sternheim's social involvement and his emotional commitment to his beliefs.

The early plays, e.g. Don Juan, Ulrich und Brigitte, indicate Sternheim's romantic tendencies, and these were never entirely checked in the later plays: Thekla and the Fürst (Bürger Schippel), Lene and Tack (Perleberg), all are characters conceived in a romantic vein. The romanticism of these characters serves to contrast with the extreme self-assertion of Sternheim's "heroes." Characters are always one extreme or the other, for the exaggeration of their qualities is intended to underline Sternheim's message. Yet it is precisely this exaggeration which led to so much virulent criticism of the idea of the "eigene Nuance." Sternheim's main concern was with honesty towards oneself in contrast to the blatant hypocrisy that he saw all around him,

but by exaggerating this idea and showing "heroes" like Christian Maske, Sternheim invited strong criticism.

Sternheim's public failed to grasp that the basic idea was very simple: if one is true to oneself, then one will be honest in relationships with other people, and society will be improved. This implies no suggestion of anarchy, for Sternheim never expresses a wish to alter the structure of society's institutions. The revolution must be in people's attitudes towards themselves and each other.

The cycle Aus dem bürgerlichen Heldenleben faithfully reflects Sternheim's theoretical writings. The lessons of self-fulfillment, and the individual's right to create his own morality are illustrated throughout the plays. However, the criticisms of immorality and hedonism are not successfully countered.

Thus, the plays accurately convey Sternheim's ideas, but they also convey the logical inconsistencies inherent within them. However, it must be remembered that the plays do not represent a formal presentation of his philosophical ideas, but, rather, a candid illustration of society's weaknesses, which will lead people to undertake its improvement. It is unfortunate that the "Arzt am Leib seiner Zeit" prescribed a cure which was too radical for the patient to accept.

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